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THE NEW YORKER

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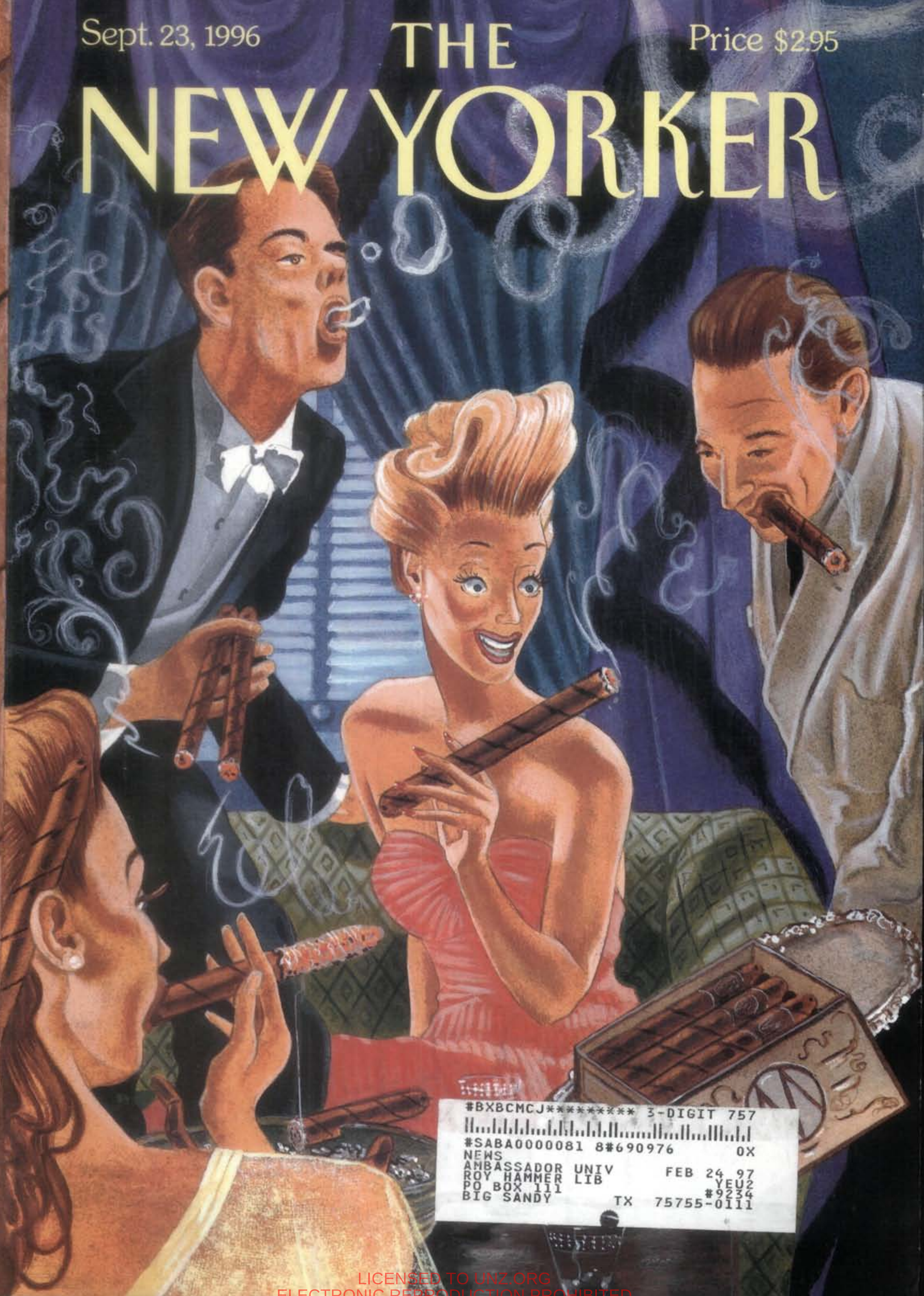

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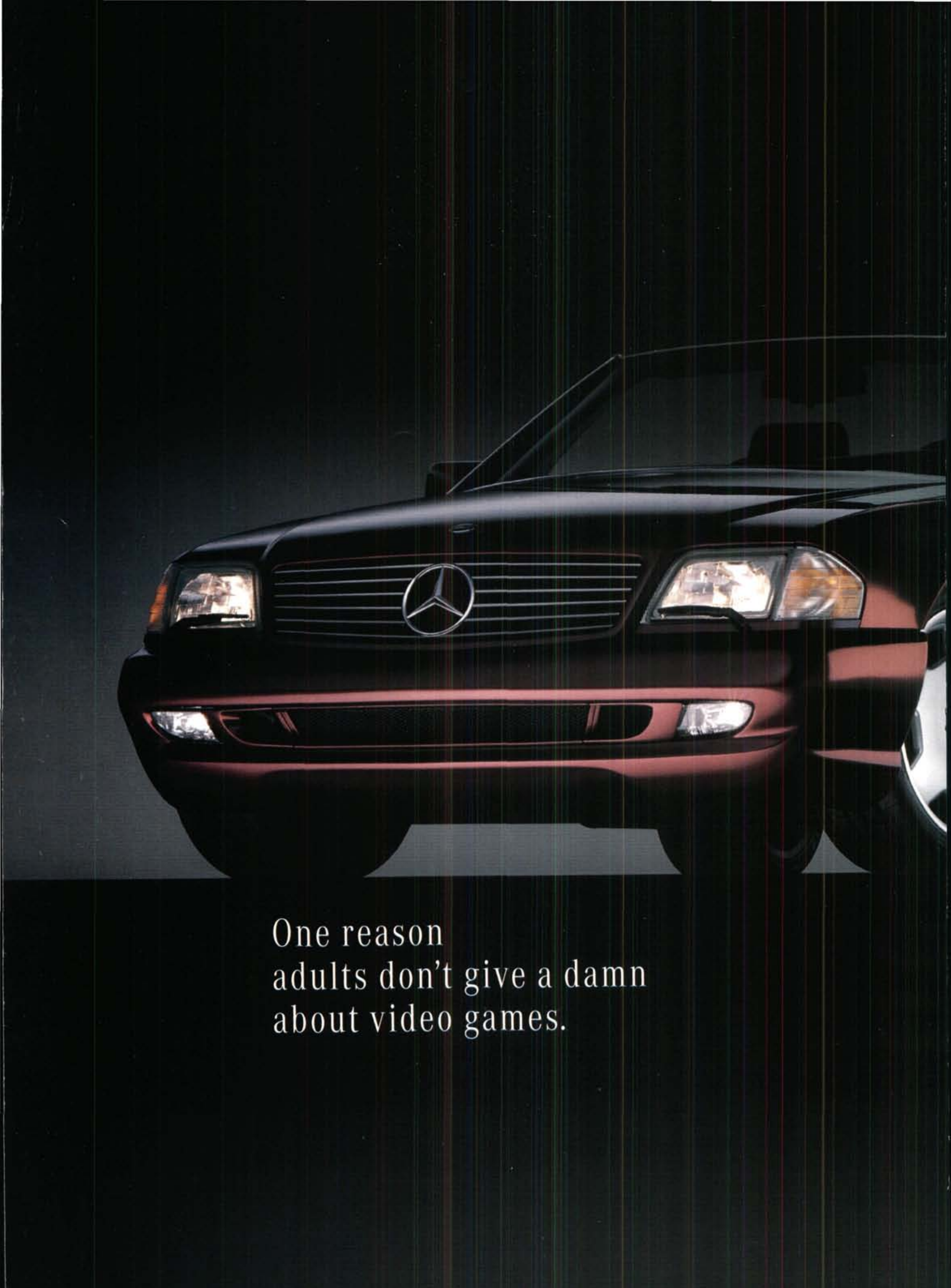
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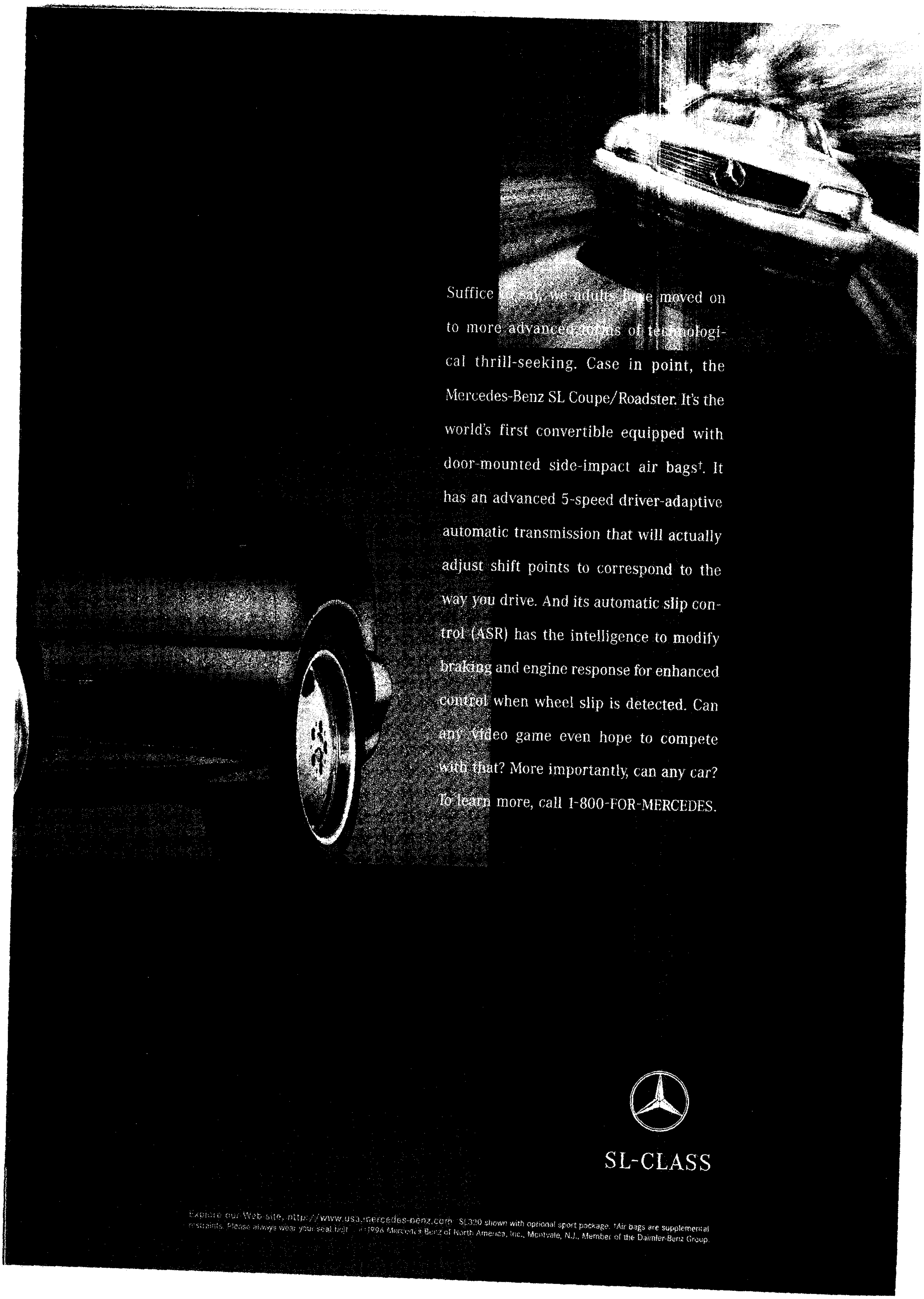

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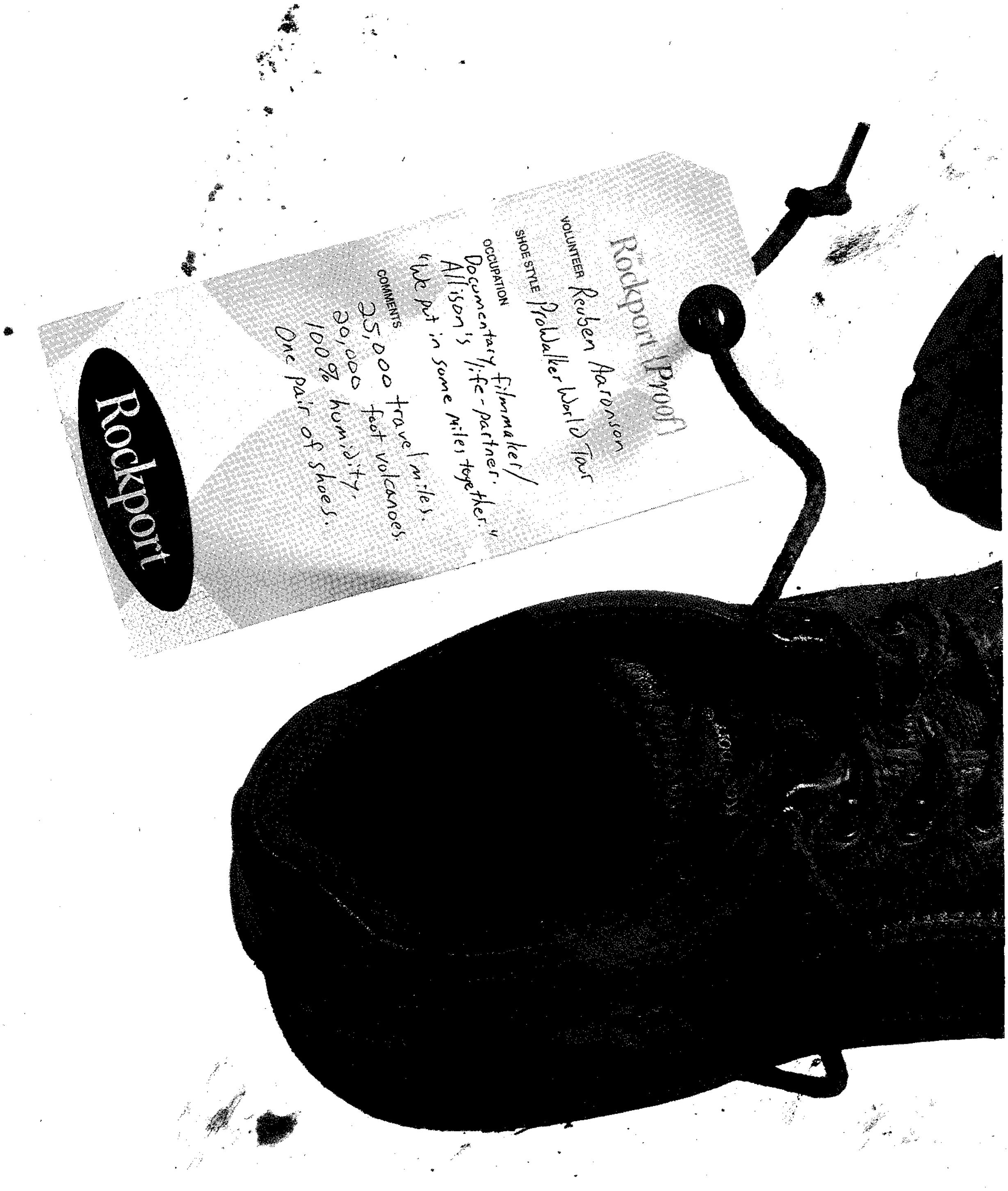
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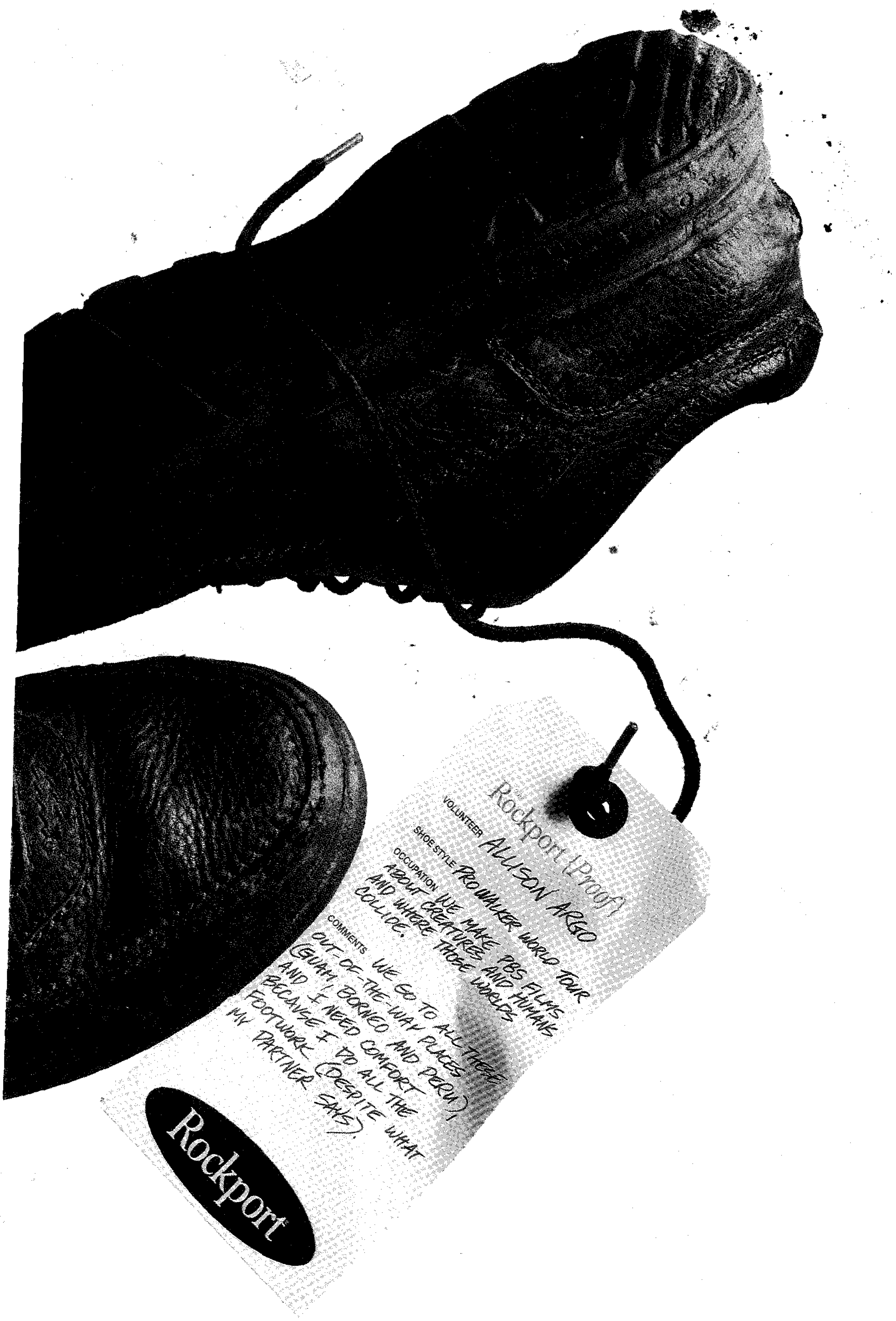

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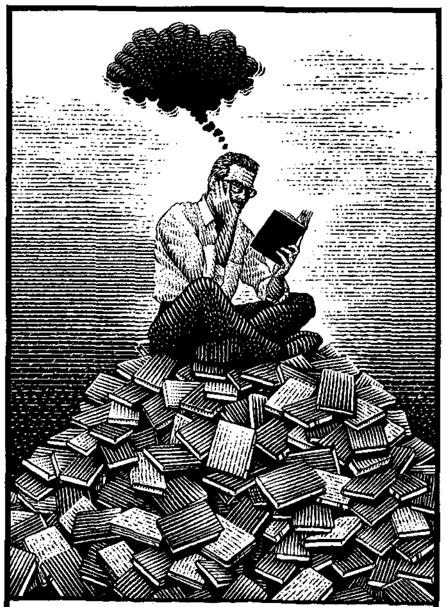

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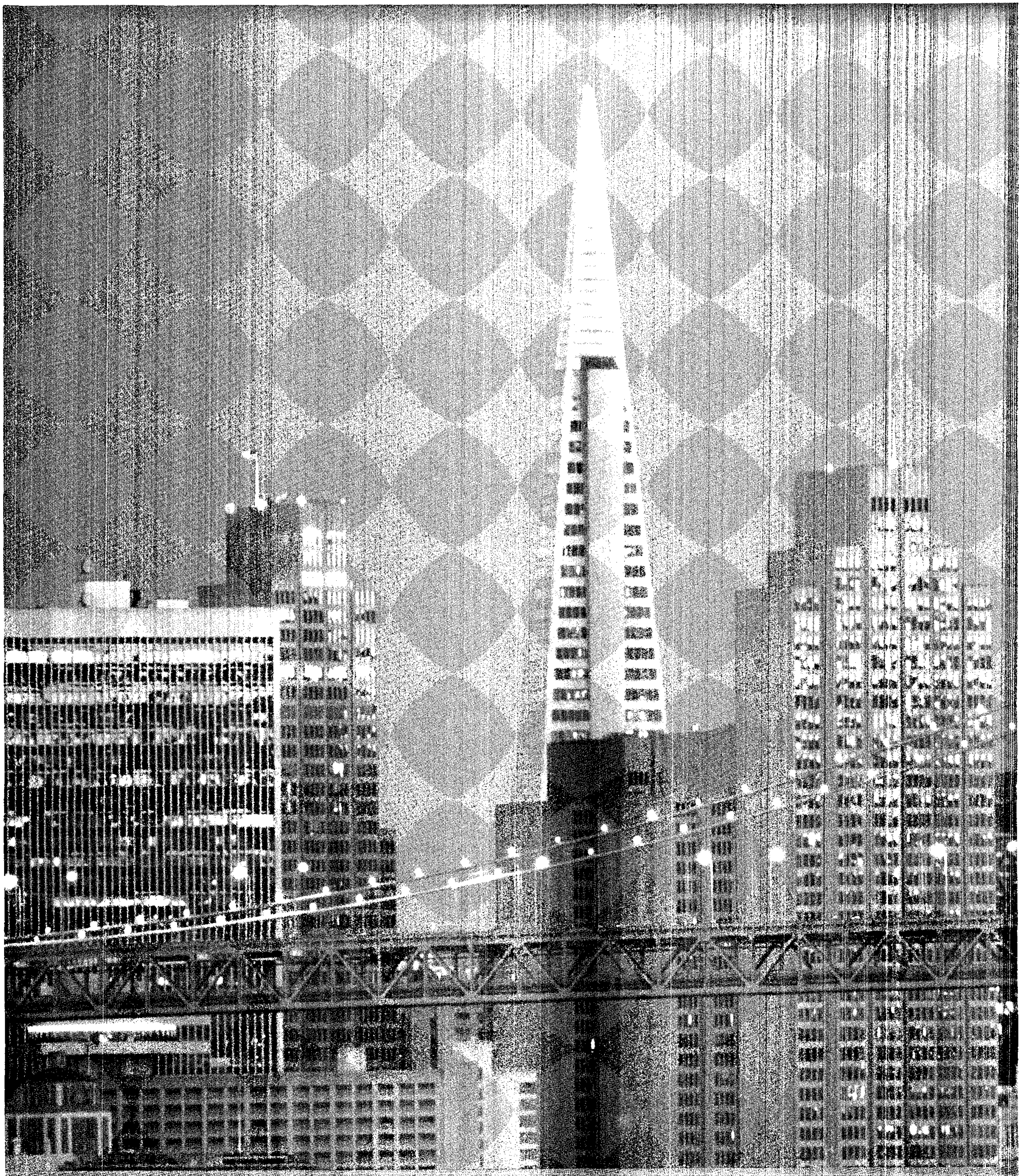

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COMMENT

NICARAGUA'S SECOND ACT

An election drama with a sombre backdrop.

THE ethnically cleansed balloting in Bosnia over the weekend and the Clinton-Dole family-values face-off seven weeks from now are not the only elections on the world's agenda this autumn. On October 20th, the people of Nicaragua will go to the polls for the first time since the epochal defeat of the Sandinista Front, in February of 1990. A fledgling democracy's second election is frequently said to be its real test. There was a worldwide wave of liberation that began in 1989, and in many countries the moment for that second election has lately been coming up—it came up in Russia three months ago—and now it is Nicaragua's turn.

The American press has reason to approach Nicaragua with caution. Throughout the nineteen-eighties, Nicaragua was engulfed by revolutionary turmoil and civil war. The passions thus inflamed were felt scarcely less keenly, if far less lethally, in the government offices and think tanks and universities and newsrooms of the United States. The Reagan Administration raised the stakes—for the Nicaraguans and, as it turned out, for itself, too—by going to extreme and, ultimately, unlawful lengths to supply the Contra guerrillas who took up arms against the Sandinista government; and the American press found itself buffeted by the zealotries of the day. Many honest reporters came under ideological attack—singled out by the right as Communist dupes or by the left as C.I.A. stooges. And the press did make one major misjudgment. In the months leading up to that 1990 election, which served as a referendum on the Sandinista revolution, much of the press took it for granted that the Sandinistas were too popular—or, failing that, too ruthless—to lose. But Nicaragua's voters, under the protective eyes of an army of international observers, gave an impressive victory to a motley opposition coalition led by Violeta Chamorro, the widow of a famous newspaper editor whose murder, under the old Somoza dictatorship, had originally touched off the Sandinista uprising.

One reporter who attracted his share of ideological pummelling in those days was Paul Berman, whose account of the death and surprising afterlife of Benjamin Linder, an idealistic American supporter of the revolutionary cause, appears in this issue of *The New Yorker*. During the eighties, Berman wrote mostly for leftish publications such as *Mother Jones* and the *Village Voice*, and his chronicles of the Sandinistas' slide into authoritarianism and unpopularity

THE NEW YORKER, 20 WEST 43RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036. Thomas A. Florio, president; Pamela Maffei McCarthy, senior vice-president/deputy editor; Diane M. Silberstein, senior vice-president/publisher; Pamela H. Older, vice-president/manufacturing director; Peter Armour, vice-president/circulation director; Rhonda Pinzer Sherman, vice-president/special-projects director; Maurie Perl, vice-president/public-relations director; Robert A. Silverstone, vice-president/business manager; Richard Levine, vice-president/human-resources director; Jonathan Marder, vice-president/special marketing; Carmen Lopez, associate publisher; Cindy Schreibman, creative services director; Marie Wolpert, marketing director. THE NEW YORKER is not responsible for the return or loss of submissions, or for any damage or other injury to unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any submission of a manuscript or artwork must be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope of appropriate size, bearing adequate return postage. The magazine does not consider unsolicited photographs or transparencies. © 1996 by *The New Yorker* Magazine, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of THE NEW YORKER. The periodical's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are registered trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers, Inc., published through its division *The New Yorker* Magazine, Inc.

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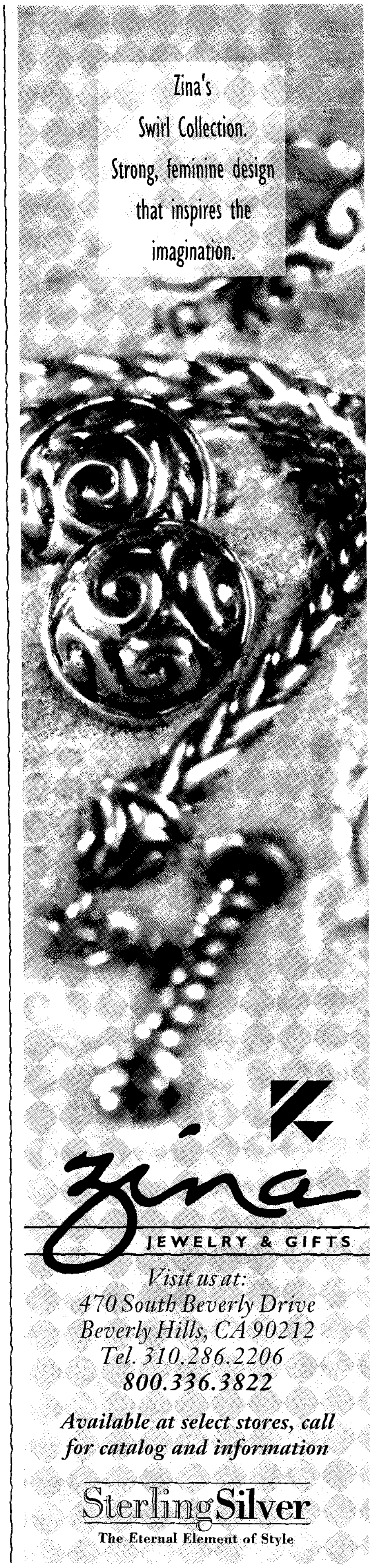

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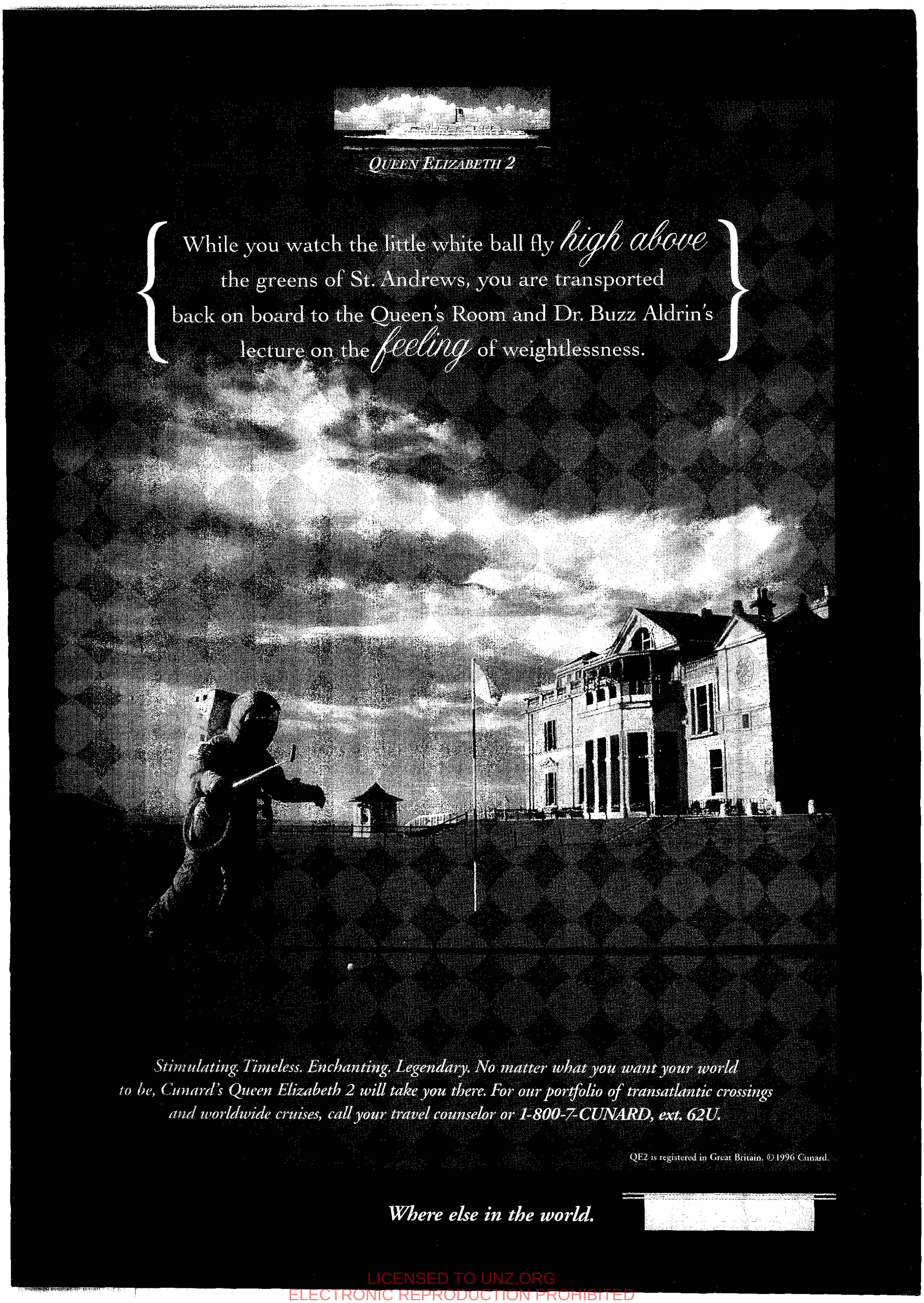
didn't always please his readers. (Berman seems to have an instinct for the crossfire. A recently published book of his about sixties radicalism has been attacked with equal enthusiasm by *The Nation* for trashing its subject and by *The Weekly Standard* for celebrating it.)

The Contra war triggered the biggest Washington political scandal since Watergate, yet we know relatively little about that war, and even less about its consequences for the rural areas where it was actually fought. Through the lens of a single incident—the killing of Linder—Berman illuminates the larger landscape. One truth that emerges is that the war was authentically a *civil* war. This is something that during the nineteen-eighties few on either side of the bitter American debate were willing to acknowledge. The right saw the Sandinistas as agents of foreign influence, and their government as a product of Soviet and Cuban machinations. The left saw the Contras as a mercenary band of murderers created and wholly sustained by the C.I.A. and by remnants of Somoza's old Army. It's now clear that the Sandinistas were (and are) a genuinely Nicaraguan phenomenon—witness their survival to this day as the country's single largest and most cohesive political party. And it's clear that the Contras were a genuine peasant insurgency—in fact, the largest guerrilla army in the modern history of Latin America. The aftermath of the 1990 election saw an uncanny ideological reversal of what had happened earlier in neighboring El Salvador and Guatemala: while democratically elected politicians presided in the capital, the former regime retained control of the Army and the police, some elements of which engaged with impunity in what the State Department used to delicately call, in other cases, "death-squad activity." The war abated, but it never fully ended. In a few isolated pockets of the Nicaraguan countryside, Contras and Sandinistas still fight.

This is the sad background against which Nicaragua must now conduct its second election. In countries all over the world, one of the hardest steps in building democracy is creating sturdy legal structures and political parties. This is manifest in Russia, where the electoral process is shaky and the democratic reformers have had trouble uniting. Nicaragua's troubles are similar. The electoral system is shaky: in a country of significant illiteracy, there are three different kinds of voter-registration cards, six different ballots, and an underfunded, capricious election bureaucracy. There are too many parties: no fewer than twenty-three have presented Presidential candidates. Some of the more admirable candidates—such as Sergio Ramírez, the novelist who was the Sandinista government's Vice-President and now leads a democratic party—are stymied by the chronic disunity of moderate and liberal forces. In this setting, the only candidates making headway are the matched demagogues of the old right and the old left: Arnoldo Alemán, the former mayor of Managua, who is an old-fashioned populist caudillo, and Daniel Ortega, the smoothly repackaged Sandinista ex-President. Both of them are combining high-minded appeals to civic virtue with veiled calls for vengeful confrontation, and, once in office, either is capable of provoking rebellion or unleashing repression.

Nicaragua is the second-poorest country in the hemisphere, after Haiti. It has no universally respected political leader to help guide its transition—no Mandela, no Havel. It has no democratic history to appeal to, and its civil society is weak. Its poverty and misery are so great that it is easy to overlook the one big success of the Chamorro years: the achievement of what is, by the standards of the region, a remarkable degree of political liberty. Nicaragua's press is free and vigorous, and, at least in the towns and cities, people feel freer than ever before to speak their minds. But without solid institutions and a healthy political center freedom is always fragile. As Berman's report suggests, and as the experience of country after country has shown, the truest division, in Nicaragua as elsewhere, is not between right and left but between decency and cruelty—between those who can learn from violence and suffering and those who cannot. If next month's election is a test, it is one that Nicaragua will probably pass. But it may be enough if the country is marked "present." The drama in Nicaragua these next weeks is the drama of many countries on the road to democracy. Democracy is a struggle, and the struggle does not end.

—HENDRIK HERTZBERG



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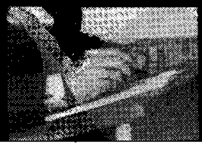

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IN THE MAIL

UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES?

While Adam Gopnik is entitled to his opinion of my biography of Charlie Chaplin, "Tramp" (Books, August 12th), I object to his implication that my discussion of Chaplin's pro-Communism lacks balance. Several years ago, I wrote a biography of Charles and Anne Lindbergh. Had I neglected to discuss General Lindbergh's attitude toward the Nazis, I would have been pilloried, and rightly so. Why, then, is it in bad taste for me to bring up Chaplin's mistaken belief that Communists were our true intellectuals, which went much further? My point was simply to show how a major movie star was manipulated by people who were content to see him suffer humiliation for purposes of anti-American propaganda. I believe that in the end Chaplin felt he had been used, and if he could consider this possibility why can't we? Perhaps because we don't like to be reminded that those who romanticize political struggles are vulnerable to being conned.

JOYCE MILTON
Brooklyn, N.Y.

UN-AMERICAN MYTHS?

Garry Wills mentions that John Wayne "went to great lengths to avoid military service in the Second World War" ("John Wayne's Body," August 19th), but he doesn't give any details about it—a surprising omission, considering Wayne's "hawkish" philosophy. It's interesting that Bill Clinton is so often crucified by the Republicans as being "un-American" for having "avoided the draft," while Wayne, who apparently did the same thing, is deified as the "perfect American."

MONICA WELLS
Silver Spring, Md.

John Wayne's followers might be surprised to learn that, for all his storied political incorrectness, his picture hangs on my wall. He, my late husband, Frank Church, the Democratic senator from Idaho, and I are posing together on Contadora Island, Omar Torrijos's Panamanian retreat. It was 1978, and Wayne had just pulled an odd card from his deck by passionately advocating the Panama Canal Treaties. It's a reminder that bigger-than-life heroes sometimes are bigger than life.

BETHINE CHURCH
Boise, Idaho

PARTY ON

Sidney Blumenthal's "A Doll's House" (The Political Scene, August 19th) missed the fact that Christine Whitman, who ran the Republican Convention, and Susan Molinari, who delivered the keynote speech, are both pro-choice advocates who could command the attention of the delegates. The religious right won the battle for the platform but most definitely lost the war for the direction of the Party.

SAMUEL L. TENNENBAUM
West Orange, N.J.

The same week I read Mr. Blumenthal's article, two lifelong Republican friends of mine—a man in his seventies and a woman in her fifties—told me they were leaving the Party. At least, moderate Republicans like them have somewhere to go—to Bill Clinton's Democratic Party. Not so lucky are Democrats like me, whose first capture of the White House in twelve years has turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory.

PAUL SWIFT
Rhinebeck, N.Y.

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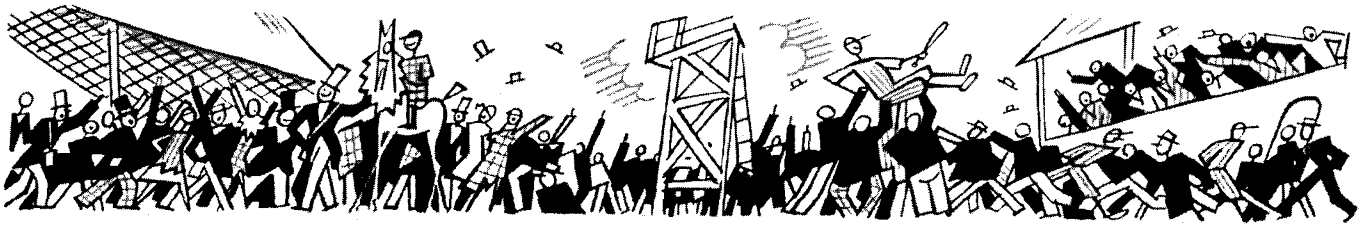

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Americana—A revue surveying the evolution of the nation's music since the eighteen-nineties. In previews. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

Brides of the Moon—The Wow Café opens the season with a science-fiction work in progress by the Five Lesbian Brothers—Maureen Angelos, Babs Davy, Dominique Dibbell, Peg Healy, and Lynn Shelton. Sept. 19-20 and Sept. 22 at 8 and Sept. 21 at 7 and 10. (59 E. 4th St., between Second Ave. and Bowery.777-4280.)

Carmelina—The York Theatre Company's Musicals in Mufti series of overlooked works continues with a concert performance of Burton Lane, Alan Jay Lerner, and Joseph Stein's 1979 work about an Italian woman who dupes three American soldiers. Sept. 20 at 8, Sept. 21 at 2:30 and 8, and Sept. 22 at 2:30. The series runs through Sept. 29. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

City Water Tunnel #3—Marty Pottenger's multimedia performance piece, which focusses on the ongoing construction of New York City's third water tunnel, is an examination of laborers and their effect on the world. Opens Sept. 18 at 8 and continues through Oct. 6. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

Edmond—The Atlantic Theatre Company begins the season with David Mamet's 1982 urban morality drama. Directed by Clark Gregg. In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

Einstein: A Stage Portrait—John Crowther portrays the fluffy-haired physicist, in a new play by Willard Simms. In previews. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-6322.)

Fit to Be Tied—A new comedy by Nicky Silver, starring T. Scott Cunningham, Jean Smart, Matt Keeslar, and Dick Latessa. Previews begin Sept. 20. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back!—Gerard Alessandrini cuts a satirical swath through the Great White Way in a new edition of his musical parody. In previews. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Full Gallop—The Manhattan Theatre Club's production of Mary Louise Wilson and Mark Hampton's one-woman play—in which Ms. Wilson appears as Diana Vreeland, the onetime editor of *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*—reopens at a new theatre on Sept. 24 at 7. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd. St. 239-6200.)

Pig—A working-class family's barbecue turns bad, in a drama by Tammy Ryan. Preview on Sept. 18. Opens Sept. 19 at 8 and continues through Oct. 12. (29th Street Repertory Theatre, 212 W. 29th St. 465-0575.)

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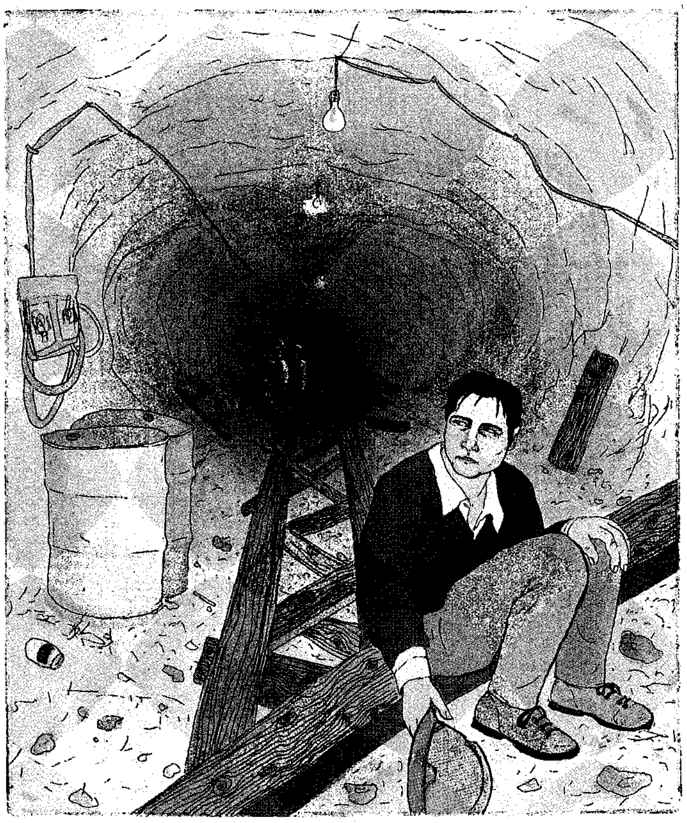
Radio Gals—An Arkansas music teacher (Carole Cook) turns her home into a nighttime radio station from which she broadcasts her own band, in a new musical by Mike Craver and Mark Hardwick (the creators of "Oil City Symphony"). In previews. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Sex and Longing—In Christopher Durang's new comedy, Sigourney Weaver and Jay Goede play friends who write a book about their sexual addictions, which comes under attack by right-wingers. A Lincoln Center Theatre production, directed by Garland Wright. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Skylight—From London, where it was originally staged at the Royal National Theatre, comes David Hare's latest drama, starring Michael Gambon and Lia Williams and directed by Richard Eyre. Two previews on Sept. 18. Opens Sept. 19 at 6:45. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

View of the Dome—Theresa Rebeck's new drama, about a Washington, D.C., attorney and her political machinations within a corrupt system. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)



Marty Pottenger, in "City Water Tunnel #3."

LARA TOMLIN

OPENED RECENTLY

The All-Nude College-Girl Revue—A return engagement of Lisa Faith Phillips's semiautobiographical play, about a coed who takes an unconventional job. (Samuel Beckett, 412 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Oct. 3.)

Back on the Boulevard—An evening with Liliane Montevecchi singing French cabaret classics and tunes by Cole Porter, George Gershwin, and others. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Sept. 29.)

Big—This adaptation of the movie that starred Tom Hanks provides little joy, though Daniel Jenkins, as the twelve-year-old in a grown-up's body, is sweet and likable. Directed by Mike Ockrent. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/27/96.) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Born to Sing!—This sequel to the long-running gospel musical "Mama, I Want to Sing!" has a negligible plot and some second-rate acting, but the point is the music, and the music is glorious. You couldn't find a better introduction to gospel without going to church. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

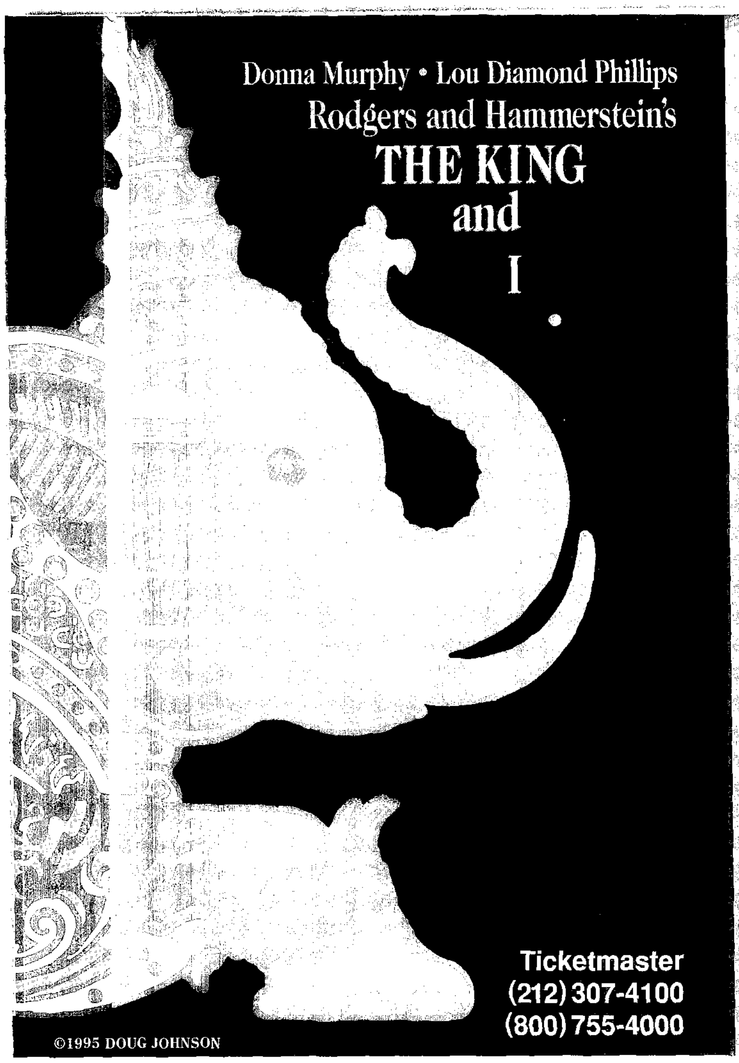
The Boys in the Band—James Lecesne, as the swishy Emory, and David Greenspan, as the lethal Harold, have a field day in Mart Crowley's 1968 study of gay self-hatred. The script no longer seems particularly shocking (except in its viciousness) or politically suspect, but it holds up soundly in this impressive revival, which was supervised by the playwright and directed with buckets of bile by Kenneth Elliott. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Chimère—Zingaro, the French equestrian theatre troupe, opens the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival, bringing horses (twenty-six of them), riders, acrobats, dancers, and an ensemble of Indian musicians together under the big top at Battery Park City. (For more information, call 1-718 636-4100.)

The Cocoanuts—The American Jewish Theatre's revival of the Irving Berlin–George S. Kaufman musical that starred the Marx Brothers in 1925—about a Florida land scheme—has moved to a new theatre, changed some cast members, and ironed out a number of the problems that plagued the original production downtown. The songs, which include "Always" and "Shaking the Blues Away," are pleasant enough, but it's the laugh-out-loud comedy that really scores. Michael McGrath, in the Groucho role, is inspired, and Celia Tackaberry, channelling Margaret Dumont, makes a worthy foil. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Cowgirls—An appealing, if somewhat predictable, musical comedy, in which three chamber musicians are transformed into fringe-wearin', honky-tonkin' cowgirls. Mary Murfitt, the show's composer and lyricist, and Betsy Howie, who wrote the book, are part of the fine cast. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

A Delicate Balance—A bracing, astringent revival of Edward Al-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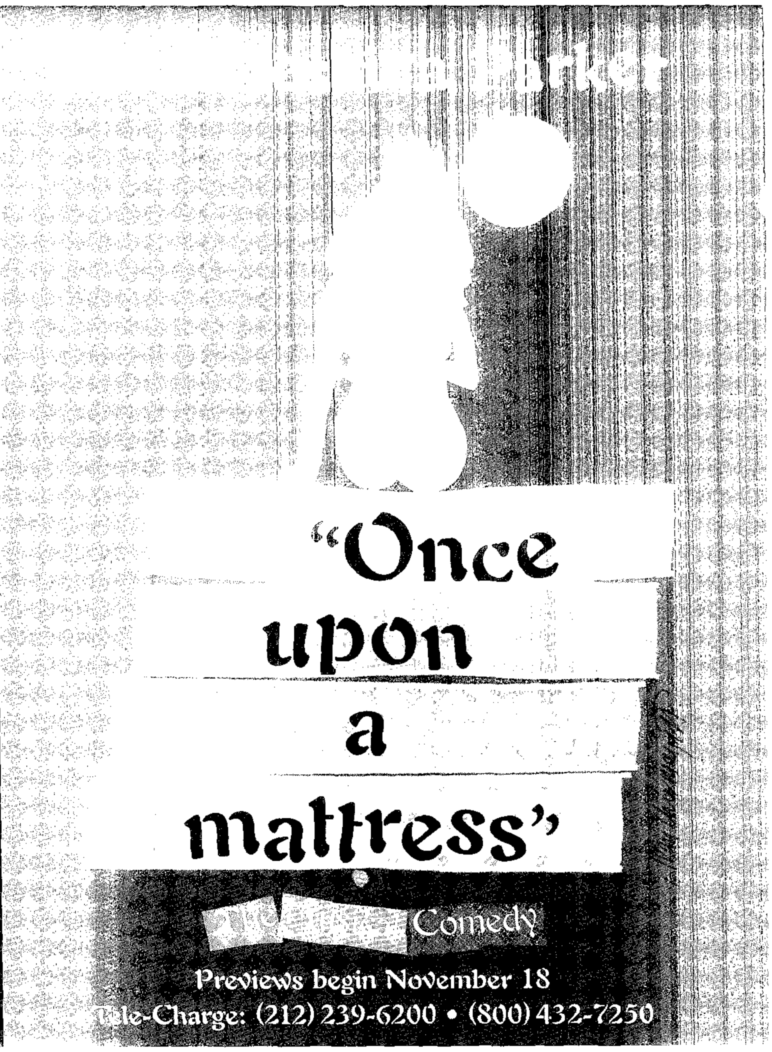
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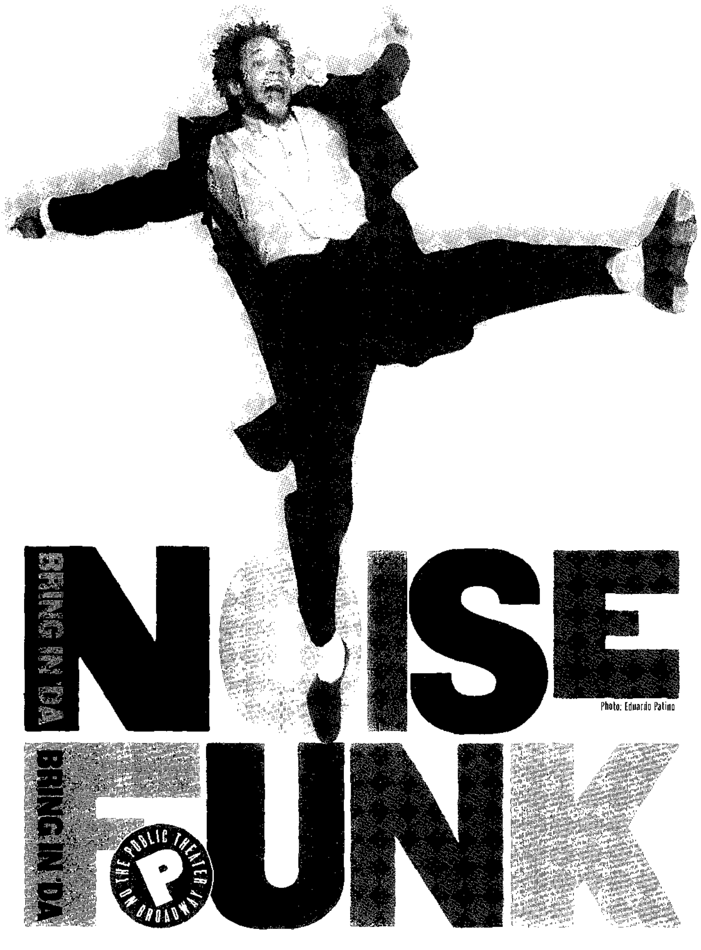
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bee's 1966 play about a family that has sacrificed much of its humanity for the sake of appearances. The cast, under the fine direction of Gerald Gutierrez, is uniformly excellent. (5/27/96) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 29.)

Disappearing Act—A new revue about big-city gay life, by Michael Oster. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Dixon Place—Sept. 18 and Sept. 20-21 at 8: "The Tall Blonde Woman in the Short Puerto Rican Body," Alba Sanchez's solo show about Nuyorican culture. . . . ¶ Sept. 21 at 10:30: "Thirty & Bloodthirsty," a new monologue by Amanda Vogel. (258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088.)

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum—Burt Shevelove, Larry Gelbart, and Stephen Sondheim's 1962 musical-comedy version of a Roman farce is a joke play that begs for outrageousness. But Jerry Zaks's peppy, acrylic revival, starring Nathan Lane, seldom enters that giddy zone of comic daring. (5/20/96) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Grace & Glorie—Tom Ziegler's predictable but charmingly told tale of an illiterate Virginia mountain woman (Estelle Parsons) and the Harvard M.B.A. (Lucie Arnaz) who befriends her in her last days. Under Gloria Muzio's direction, the two actresses make the blend of humor and pathos affecting rather than—as it might easily have been—cloying. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-9393.)

Heating & Cooling—A comedy about air-conditioning, by Sara Plath. Presented by the Lark Theatre Company. (Chelsea Playhouse, 125 W. 22nd St. 727-3626. Closes Sept. 29.)

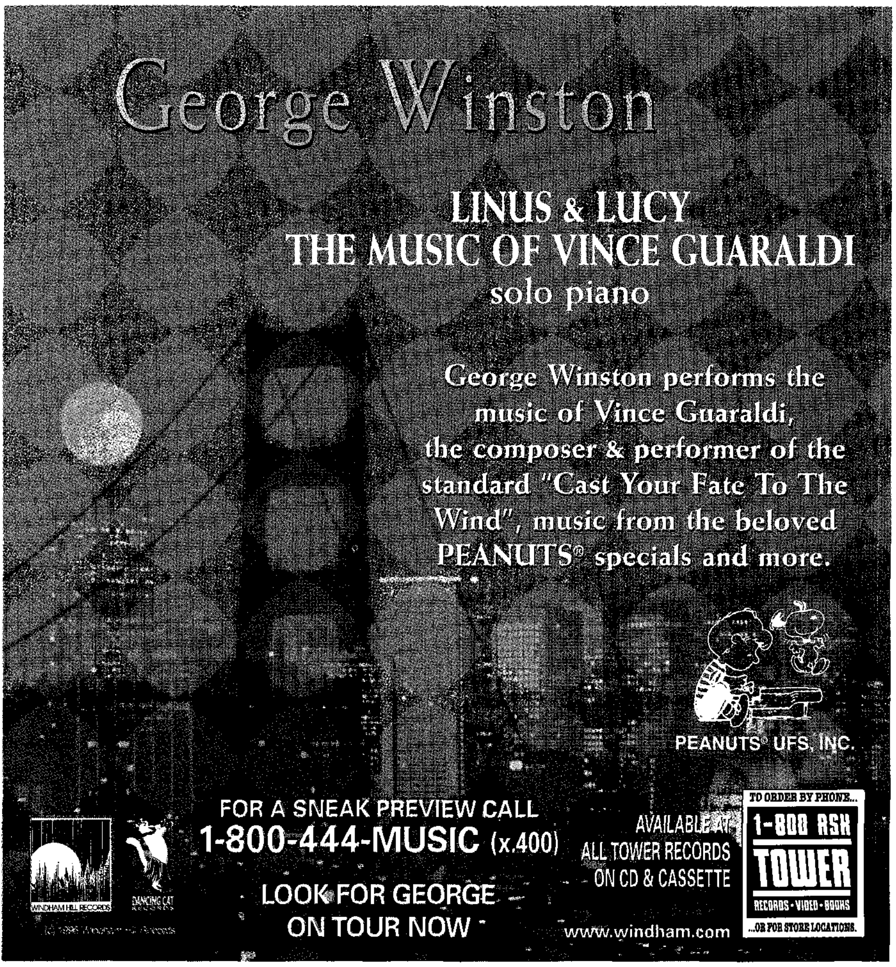
Howard Crabtree's When Pigs Fly—The exuberant, over-the-top designer Howard Crabtree died in June, and this production (created with and written and directed by Mark Waldrop) is a fitting cap to his career. It's a revue of witty, satiric songs that purport to be part of a larger show that keeps falling apart, leaving Michael West, who plays Crabtree, wondering whether he should have become a chicken farmer. Some of the bits work better than others, but the combination of love songs ("Newt—I think you're cute," sings one forlorn man), charming silliness (a centaur wonders why the other guys at the gym treat him differently), and occasional serious moments, performed by a wonderful cast decked out in Crabtree's sequinned, feathered, mind-boggling costumes, is a sure sign that chicken farming's loss was our gain. With music by Dick Gallagher. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Hughie—Al Pacino stars as the blowhard gambler Erie Smith, in his own staging of Eugene O'Neill's 1941 drama. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

An Ideal Husband—In Oscar Wilde's hundred-and-one-year-old play, a youthful transgression comes back to threaten the career of a promising Cabinet member. The man who saves the day is played, with showy aplomb, by Martin Shaw. The rest of the delightful, mostly British cast, under the direction of Peter Hall, is well up to the Wildean wit and wisdom, and the evening flies by in a flash of epigrammatic splendor. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change—In made-for-musical-theatre voices, the appealing cast of Joe DiPietro and Jimmy Roberts's crowd-pleasing revue about love and marriage sings songs examining such made-for-musical-theatre issues as parents who talk baby talk, the injustice of long ladies'-room lines, the gruesomeness of bridesmaids' dresses, and the unbearable triteness of shopping. Couples in the audience may nudge each other happily as they guess the actors' lines before they're uttered. Directed by Joel Bishoff. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

International Festival of Puppet Theatre—The biennial series of avant-garde works runs through Sept. 22, at the Public Theatre (425 Lafayette St.; 563-5544), P.S. 122 (150 First Ave.; 477-5288), La Mama (74A E. 4th St.; 475-7710), Dance Theatre Workshop (219 W. 19th St.; 924-0077), and the New Victory Theatre (209 W. 42nd St.; 563-5544).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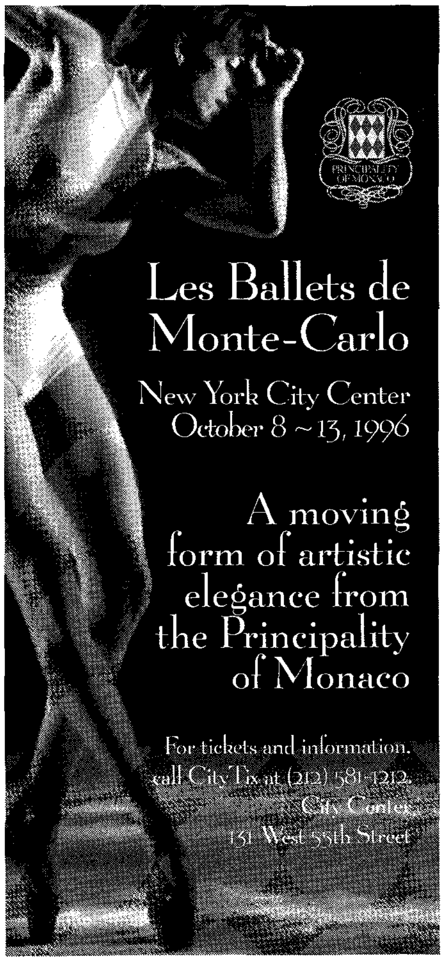
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Jason and Medea—A modern-day adaptation of works by Seneca and Euripides, incorporating music and dance. Written by Dennis Moritz. (Nuyorican Poets Café, 236 E. 3rd St. 505-8183. Closes Oct. 6.)

The King and I—In a word, magnificent. Hats off to Donna Murphy, as Anna, Lou Diamond Phillips, as the King of Siam, and everyone else (including Rodgers and Hammerstein, of course) who had a hand in this production. Christopher Renshaw directed. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Matty: An Evening with Christy Mathewson—Christy Mathewson's mother wanted him to be a preacher, but Mathewson preferred baseball, and between 1911 and 1913 he led the New York Giants to three pennant victories, becoming something like the Michael Jordan of his day. When he wasn't busy endorsing products (tobacco) or inventing pitches (the screwball), he also did quite a bit of writing, which Eddie Frierson has turned into a one-man show. Frierson exhibits plenty of energy (there's no shortage of yelling), but he isn't content to merely entertain the audience with tales of such characters as manager John McGraw and Charley (Giant Jinx Killer) Faust: unfortunately, he never fails to include the moral of a story. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Misalliance—The Pearl Theatre Company opens its season with Shaw's 1910 satire. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

900 Oneonta—Jon Cryer leads the cast in Circle Repertory Theatre's season opener, a dark comedy by David Beaird about a dying Louisiana oil baron and his damaged family, which had its première last year in London's West End. (632 Broadway, near Bleecker St. 505-6010.)

Old Wicked Songs—Jon Marans' well-written piece of sentimental sanctimony asks the question: Can a blocked, arrogant twenty-five-year-old pianist find wisdom under the tutelage of a suicidal singing teacher who survived the Holocaust? (The answer is yes.) The crowd-pleasing evening is carried on the cool command of Justin Kirk, who plays the young man with swaggering style. Hal Robinson, as the wily coach, hangs in there, too, but sometimes the dialogue and his dialect let him down. The characters go through their changes neatly, but the audience arrives at the station long before the engine of the plot does. (9/16/96) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Othello and the Circumcised Turk—Assurbanipal Babilla's take on the Moor's tragedy incorporates text and characters from other Shakespeare plays and Middle Eastern burlesque traditions. Continues, Thursdays through Sundays, through Sept. 29. (Vineyard's 26th Street Theatre, 309 E. 26th St. 925-7469.)

O Wholly Night and Other Jewish Solecisms—Deb Margolin embraces what she calls "the exquisite burdens" of Jewishness in her lyrical one-woman show, managing to be funny yet earnest, scornful yet sentimental, lighthearted yet brokenhearted as she recounts her memories: childhood accusations of being a Christ killer, Holocaust films in grade school ("more socially relevant than Power Rangers"), trips to her grandmother's Florida retirement community, insomnia, and—a perfect example of the love that comes out of grief—her husband's marriage proposal at his mother's funeral. According to Margolin, these all come under the rubric of waiting for the Messiah, an activity for which you should always "behave gracefully and dress reasonably." Directed by Margot Lewitin. (Interart, 549 W. 52nd St. 279-4200.)

Paved Paradise—Performance artist John Kelly's solo musical work, a paean to Joni Mitchell. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Closes Sept. 28.)

Phaedra—In his new one-person show, Everett Quinton, of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, takes on all the roles in the tragic soap opera recalled in the title. He cuts a striking figure, with his bald head and combat-fatigues gown, but his frantic pace suggests that he's trying to make up in sweat what he lacks in art. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 307-4100. Closes Sept. 29.)

The Sleeping Hippo—Max Mayer's drama about a woman who becomes involved in a triangle with a poor artist (who hangs out in her rundown East Village bar) and his rich patron. (Theatre Row Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 715-1808. Closes Sept. 29.)

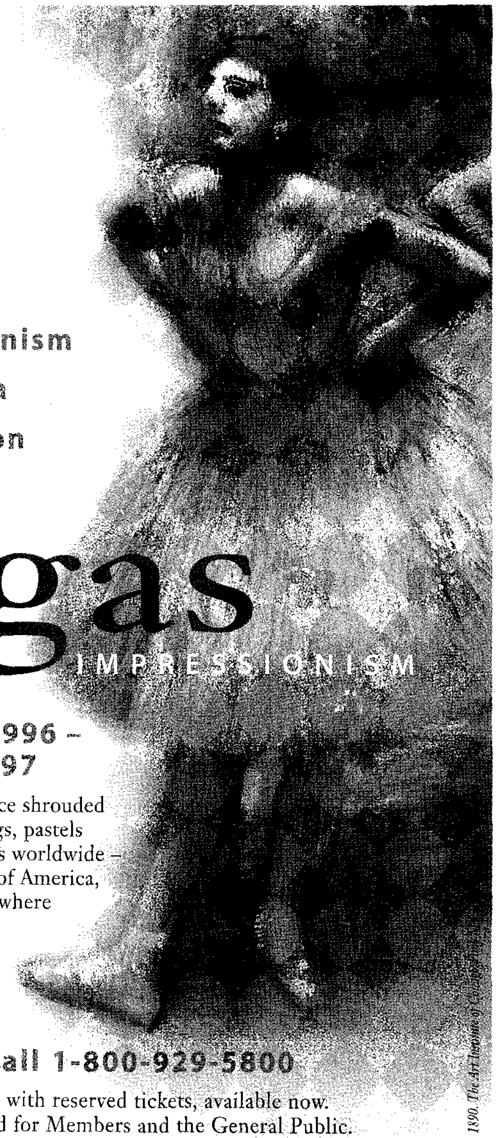
Summer and Smoke—The Roundabout has given Tennessee Williams's 1948 drama, about the unrequited love of the prim, pure Alma Winemiller (Mary McDonnell) for the louche doctor John Buchanan (Harry Hamlin), an uneven but compelling revival. McDonnell radiates decency and intelligence and makes both Alma's nervousness and the punishing slow burn of her desire convincing. Hamlin may not have the Promethean energy that Williams called for, but he's handsome, charming, and bubbling with testosterone, and he and McDonnell have a tender, appealing rapport. Unfortunately, director David Warren's omission of a crucial emblematic gesture at the end suggests that he has mounted the play without really understanding it. (9/16/96) (Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Volunteer Man—Rattlestick Productions presents a dark comedy-drama by Dan Clancy, about the relationship between an AIDS hospice worker and a dying man. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 353-3665.)

What the Butler Saw—Jean Cocteau Repertory presents Joe Orton's 1969 satire, directed by Scott Shattuck. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **LOVE THY NEIGHBOR:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broad-



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Edgar Degas, Two dancers (detail), c. 1890. The Art Institute of Chicago

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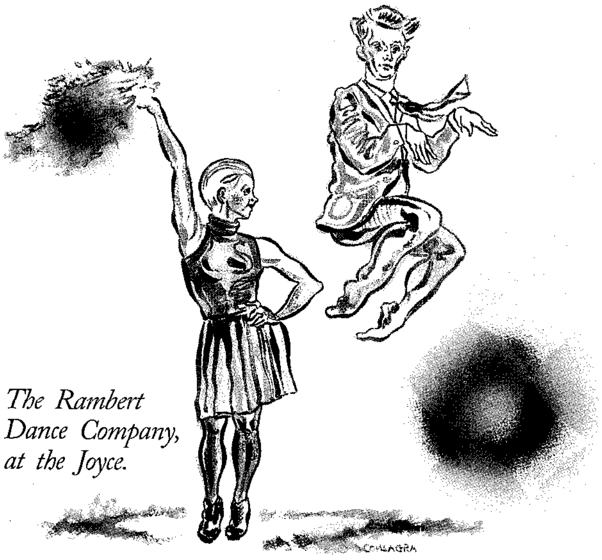


The Rambert Dance Company, at the Joyce.

DANCE

RAMBERT DANCE COMPANY—The seventy-year-old company from London's West End returns to New York after a nine-year absence. Its founder, Marie Rambert, died in 1982, nearly twenty years after she replaced the company's original ballet repertoire with more contemporary forms, as reflected in the three programs in this engagement. The featured works include "Rooster," a dance set to the music of the Rolling Stones which burlesques the typical rock singer's strut, and "Petite Mort," a piece by Jiri Kylian which likens the thrust and parry of fencing to the mechanics of sex. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Sept. 17-20 and Sept. 24 at 8, Sept. 21 at 2 and 8, and Sept. 22 at 2 and 7:30. Through Sept. 29.)

AMERICAN YOUTH DANCE THEATRE—A New York-based company dedicated to re-creating historical repertory on school-age dancers, takes on the work of Isadora Duncan in its première season. The young corps is joined onstage by Catherine Gallant, Natalia Alonzo-Brillante, and Carrie Ellen Schoenberg, three veteran practitioners of Duncan's sweet and ravishing technique. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Sept. 19-20 at 8:30 and Sept. 21 at 3 and 8:30.)

GRUPO AFROCUBA DE MATANZAS—The sixteen-member troupe, founded in the port city of Matanzas in the year leading up to the Cuban revolution, reënacts a generous selection of Afro-Caribbean rituals, from Yoruban possession dances to Matanzan purification chants. It also performs more secular displays, like the rumba competition re-created in the evening's finale. The company is backed by an onstage rhythm section that includes the *lyessa* (a set of three handheld drums and one waist-high one), the *cajones* (wooden drum boxes), and the *nganga* (magic pot). (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Sept. 20 at 8.)

"FALLING WITH GRACE"—The Artichoke Dance Company, which consists of a trio of choreographers—Amy Drum, Daniel Gwirtzman, and Lynn Neuman—and sixteen supporting dancers, offers a program of recent works on ancient themes, including "The Family Tree" (the story of original sin, set to Elvis Presley's "Are You Lonesome Tonight?") and, naturally, "The Dancing Shoes," based on a fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 780-4722. Sept. 19-20 at 8, Sept. 21 at 2 and 8, and Sept. 22 at 2.)

"FLAMENCO IN CONCERT"—The farewell tour of Ramón de los Reyes and his Spanish Dance Theatre. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 307-7171. Sept. 21-22 at 8.)

INDRANI—The Indian dance company performs in three styles of Hindu devotional dance, presenting two forms of temple dance (an orissa invocation to the elephant-headed god Ganesh and a bharata natya enumerating Shiva's attributes) and a percussive-style kathak dance set to a love song for the divine paramours Krishna and Radha. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Sept. 21 at 8.)

"THE COMPANY OF MEN"—This year's showcase of works by male choreographers brings together Peter Pucci, David Parsons, Wally Cardona, Andrew Asnes, and Kraig Patterson, among others. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Sept. 19-21 at 8 and Sept. 22 at 2.)

NIGHT LIFE

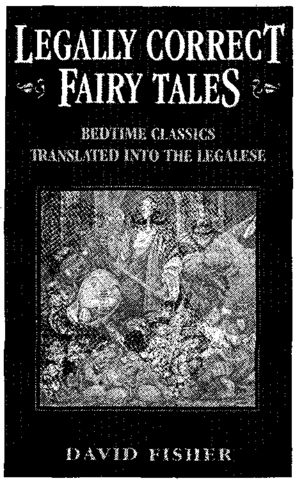
CONCERTS

FRED HERSCH—This pianist has received a lot of press recently as one of the first jazz musicians to come out as H.I.V.-positive and to actively campaign against AIDS, but his supple Bill Evans-infused lyricism has been drawing attention for years. He's a dyed-in-the-wool romantic, but he has a feel for history (he's a Billy Strayhorn expert), and his formal cast cloaks his poetry in bittersweet. He's also one of the few young jazz pianists who can pull off an evening of solo improvisation. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Sept. 18 at 8.)

ROSEMARY CLOONEY—"Singing is the only thing I've done all my life," the great Kentucky songbird once said. "I've had lots of boyfriends, one husband, five children, small houses, big houses—but singing is the one constant." When *Time* did a cover story on her, in 1953, she had a pure, lilting voice; now, keeping the dogs of age at bay, she has tightened her vibrato, shortened her long notes, and dropped to a contralto. Her diction, always clear, has become crystalline, and she has moved behind the beat and turned into—what else?—a jazz singer. Listen to the way she effortlessly rocks "We're in the Money" and "Limehouse Blues" and "Will You Still Be Mine?" on her latest CD, "Dedicated to Nelson" (Concord). Better still, join her at this stately hall, where she'll perform the same songs in the flesh—a cool, breathing Maillol. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 19 at 8.)

"WEIRD AL" YANKOVIC—The first song parodist since Allan Sherman to make a significant dent in the charts (his latest, "Bad Hair Day," is currently No. 69, putting him just five notches below Bush and four above Natalie Merchant), Weird Al—the son of polka legend Big Al Yankovic—is an occasionally amusing goober who has finally accumulated enough fans to justify concerts in large auditoriums. When he's on, he can

PIER CONSAGRA



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be very funny—"Eat It" nicely skewered Michael Jackson, and "Amish Paradise," his new video parody of Coolio's "Gangsta's Paradise," gets its share of chuckles. In fact, Weird Al is probably best enjoyed in his videos, which boast high production values and short running times; two hours' worth of him sounds like being trapped on a desert island with Jim Carrey. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Sept. 20 at 7:30.)

David Grisman Quintet—After a quarter of a century of tirelessly promoting acoustic music, raising the level of mandolin virtuosity, and leading some of the most sophisticated and inventive eclectic-music ensembles around, it's safe to call Grisman a national treasure. His own singular genre—folk-ethno-jazz-whatever (he calls it "dawg")—is an omnivorous and delightful blend of flashy picking and gorgeous, harmony-rich melodies. He's an oddball who's kept us pure by making music that's anything but. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Sept. 21 at 8.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Blarney Star, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Home to fine Irish music every Friday night.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Sept. 21: A tribute to Raymond Scott. Sept. 24: **J. J. Cale.** His songs have been covered by Eric Clapton, Johnny Cash, and Bryan Ferry, among others, but to most, the writer of "After Midnight" and "Cocaine" remains an unfamiliar performer. That's a shame, because his gritty vocals and lyrical playing suit his material to a tee.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Sept. 20-21: Wigs-and-powder rock with **the Upper Crust.**

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—Sept. 21: Singer-songwriter (and sometime Peter Gabriel band member) **Joy Askew.**

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dedicated to the music of the Windy City. Sept. 20-21: **Johnny (Clyde) Copeland.**

Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, punks, poseurs, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. Live music nightly.

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel vault deep in the heart of the meat district.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—The **Wild Colonials** (Sept. 18) are the salonistes of the L.A. music scene. Dr. John, Cyndi Lauper, and Rickie Lee Jones are among the guests on the band's new album, "This Can't Be Life," which is driven by Angela McCluskey's heartfelt honey-and-hot-sauce vocals. Sept. 21: The instrumental rock of **Lazy Boy.** Sept. 24: **Toshi Reagon.** This fierce and uncompromising singer once gave up a major record deal because the suits wanted to reshape her image; now she releases her records herself. On the brilliant "The Rejected Stone" (1994), she draws on the African-American song tradition revitalized by her mom, Bernice Johnson Reagon, a founder of Sweet Honey in the Rock. Her shows are celebratory—a shower of retro funk, urban blues, and folk. To hear her is to believe. The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

The Greatest Bar on Earth, 1 World Trade Center (524-7000)—Hyperbole, perhaps, but it's certainly the highest. And Thursdays through Saturdays you'll find live music, dancing, and dining, a hundred and seven stories above the city.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This sprawling two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. Sept. 20: The **Nixons.** . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—**Freedy Johnston** (Sept. 20) has a knack for churning out exacting folk-rock with a convincing Midwestern twang; his songs bristle with careful detail and piercing language. His mostly perfect "This Perfect World" captured a misshapen planet inhabited by broken folks pushed to desperate measures. He should know: he sold the family farm to support his career, an experience chronicled on his superior 1992 record, "Can You Fly" (which began with the line "Well, I sold the dirt to feed the band").

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Sept. 19: **Lori Carson.** Listening to this singer-songwriter's monologues makes you feel like you've been eavesdropping outside the confessional; you know you should leave, but you're riveted by the stark, beautiful sadness of her voice and her lyrics. She's best known for her work with Anton Fier's protean Golden Palominos, whose other members lend a hand on her upcoming "Everything I Touch Runs Wild." Sept. 20: **Dale Watson,** a pompadoured, tattooed singer-guitarist out of Austin, who plays honky-tonk as if he were on a mission from God—or at least from Merle Haggard. Sept. 21: **Magnetic Fields** makes sophisticated, spare synth-pop out of seventies-era Elton John and ABBA. It's one of New York's most revered underground bands.

Les Poulets, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and, now and then, a cha-cha. Dining.

Rodeo Bar, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—The walls simulate a log cabin, a buffalo head blows smoke through its nostrils, a horse trailer has been converted into a bar, and you get peanuts for eating and, sometimes, throwing.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Sept. 18: **Magnapop.** Sept. 21: Reggae greats **Third World.**

Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Sept. 18: **Burning Spear.** Sept. 19: The **Flying Neutrinos.** Sept. 20: Retro rock with **Nancy Boy.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Back in the fifties, **Hadda Brooks** was the Hollywood ideal of a torch singer. Stylish and sultry, she generated atmosphere from behind the piano in films like "In a Lonely Place" and "The Bad and the Beautiful." Today, at seventy-nine, she looks and acts like a sly, twinkling character out of some Chandleresque fairy tale: often in mid-song she'll jump up from the keyboard, tilt her head, look at someone in the audience, and cackle some kind of incantation. She has spunk and charm, and she's definitely something else. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Starting Sept. 24: A seventieth-birthday salute to **Billy Taylor,** featuring **Donald Byrd, John Faddis, Jimmy Heath, Joe Lovano, Tito Puente, Steve Turre, Stanley Turrentine, Phil Woods,** and many others. Taylor has been spreading the good word for as long as we can remember as a jazz educator, activist, media personality, and genteel, swinging pianist. He's touched most of the mainstream jazz community, which is why this fine cross-generational lineup is coming together to honor him. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Sept. 18: The **Buddy Rich Big Band.**

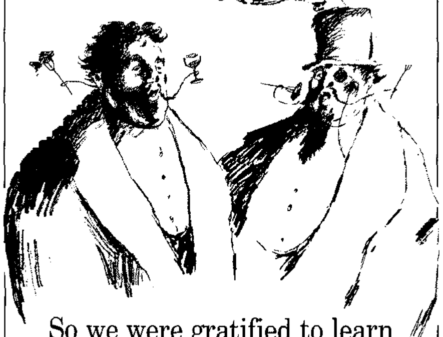
WE READ BUBBLE-EYED

in the London Standard the account of two Frenchmen who sat down to a gargantuan feast in La Rochelle's Rabelais Restaurant.

The fourteen hour, £1,500 meal opened with canapes of Sevruga caviar, foie gras, marinated salmon: progressed into emerald oysters: followed up with raw foie gras marinated in Montrachet: and pursued with a litany of crayfish, truffles, filet de boeuf en croute, salad, cherre, patisserie, sorbets ...

As for refreshment, the tally at the end of the repast was two bottles of 1969 champagne, ten bottles of Montrachet 1982, a Chateau Margaux 1966, and an 1895 Armagnac.

Of course with such a 'Grand Bouffe' behind them, our gourmands could scarcely have hoped to appreciate the sherry-gold finesse of a 25 year-old The Macallan Malt Whisky at the end of the meal.



So we were gratified to learn that, very wisely, they decided to start with it.

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Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Through Sept. 21: piano and bass with **Joanne Brackeen** and **Ira Coleman.** Dining.

Café Pierre, 2 E. 61st St. (940-8185)—Vocalist-pianist **Kathleen Landis** performs the music of Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer. Dining.

Cajun, 129 Eighth Ave., at 16th St. (691-6174)—A New Orleans-style restaurant specializing in Dixieland and swing. On Fridays, catch the Canal Street Dixieland Jazz and Blues Band. Saturdays belong to the New Atlantic Jazz Band.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through late October, the great **Barbara Cook.** . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, pianist **Peter Mintun** is in attendance.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A cool, sumptuous piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel, with twenty-two-foot-high ceilings, a long backlit bar stocked with single-malt Scotch, and fine jazz seven nights a week. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Sept. 22: **Kenny Barron** and **Charlie Haden.** Two musicians with one thing on their minds—pure lyricism. Barron's offhand-virtuoso piano and Haden's all-heart bass balance each other beautifully, as the two made perfectly clear on Barron's masterful 1995 album, "Wanton Spirit." Dining.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, and a piano.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 20: Acid jazz with the **Jazzhole.** Sept. 21: Klezmer music can bring out the goofball in some musicians; in the case of the **Klezmatics,** it happens en masse. They inject left-of-center mirth into an already mirthful music, but they also have the chops to back up their attitude, which is half downtown, half shtetl.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—A surefooted comedienne, **Faith Prince** (through late September) has an intuition for the mechanics of a joke: she never punches a punch line. She looks like a turn-of-the-century Florodora girl, with a Lillian Russell figure and a sweet, intelligent face. She's sort of perfect, and definitely perfect for "Three of Hearts: The Songs of Mary Rodgers," a new revue saluting the composer of such Broadway musicals as "Once Upon a Mattress," which showcased the great comic talents of Carol Burnett, and "Hot Spot," which starred the glorious Judy Holiday, whom Prince often resembles. Singers Jason Workman and Mark Waldrop share the spotlight. Closed Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—Thursdays belong to Stan Rubin's big band, Fridays to Lew Anderson's big band and the Kit McClure sextet, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—Sept. 20-21: The **Don Braden and Joris Teepe** quintet. With his gutsy tone and classic-but-not-embalmed approach, Braden is rapidly shaping up as a major-league tenor player; he's developed a special rapport with bassist Teepe, and they've recorded two fine CDs together.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Sept. 22: the **Chico Freeman** quartet. Starting Sept. 24: **Bobby Watson.** This alto saxophonist knows what makes a band swing—tight arrangements, memorable compositions, and a diehard commitment to rhythm. The guaranteed energy and infectious groove of his aggregations seem to emanate from the leader's upbeat playing: imagine Louis Jordan with a bebop heart. Dining.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—This legendary tourist haven makes serious jazz fans welcome in the Chestnut Room. Guitarist **Gene Bertoncini** plays through Sept. 22.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Sept. 22: a three-headed master class with **Joe Lovano, Bill Frisell,** and **Paul Motian.** Starting Sept. 24: **Roy Hargrove's Big Band.** Feisty, historically aware, and blessed with a brassy, ringing tone, Hargrove is a trumpeter who has everything except a defining personality. But he's young yet, and his boundless energy bodes well for the future. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club where the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through Sept. 21: piano and bass with **Hilton Ruiz** and **Andy Mc Cloud.** Dining.

TABLES FOR TWO

La Métairie, 189 W. 10th St., at W. 4th St. (989-0343)—Everyone *should* have a quiet, intimate French restaurant at the ready in case of a romantic emergency, and this one is unsurpassed both for hearty food and for candlelight. Even the address has a certain mystique—where but in Greenwich Village could you find an intersection like 4th and 10th Streets? A *métairie* is a type of small farm, and restaurateur Sylvain Fareri has charmingly evoked a Provençal farmhouse with agricultural implements on the walls and butter molded into the shape of chickens. (Don't be put off by the garish stained glass in the entryway: once you're inside, the ambience is as tranquil as a boat pond.)

La Métairie has an interesting wine list and a range of after-dinner drinks, but even though the restaurant has a full license it does not serve cocktails. Fareri wanted, as much as possible, to simulate the experience of dining in his favorite restaurants in Provence: before dinner he offers glasses of champagne or a dark, mysterious champagne cocktail of his own devising. The food is the *nouvelle cuisine* that over the past twenty years has become France's *cuisine classique*; sauces rely for their richness on herbal infusions and vegetable and fruit reductions rather than on cream and butter. Which is not to say that you can't sin magnificently here: the seared fresh foie gras with Calvados and caramelized apples is a sliver of nutritionally incorrect heaven. Fat, pale seafood sausages in a white wine and saffron sauce spurt with a satisfying hiss. Main courses include reliable roast cod—perched like a cloud on a mountain of mashed potatoes subtly flavored with olives and washed in a light tomato butter—and a grand hunk of beef fillet in port-wine sauce. The restaurant is open every night, there's no music, the out-of-towners are on their best behavior, and so are the locals. What more can you ask? (Open weekdays for dinner, weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées $14-$23.)

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Winslow Homer," a sumptuous, deeply satisfying survey of the painter's career, comprising nearly two hundred paintings, watercolors, and drawings. Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ "Toulouse-Lautrec." Through Sept. 29. . . . ¶ "Two by Two," in the Costume Institute, presents fifty fashion ensembles in male and female pairs, from the early eighteenth century to 1970. Through Nov. 24. . . . **Note:** The museum's roof garden is open (weather permitting), with sculptures by Rodin, Lachaise, Lipchitz, Caro, Smith (David), and Smith (Tony). Through Oct. 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Pictures of the Times: A Century of Prints from the New York *Times*." Through Oct. 1. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Africa: The Art of a Continent." Through Sept. 25. . . . ¶ "In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present." The first exhibition of this scope on this topic in New York includes work by twenty-eight artists. Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ "Meret Oppenheim: Beyond the Teacup." Through Oct. 9. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Breuer's Whitney," a show of drawings, photographs, models, and other objects chosen to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the opening of Marcel Breuer's gray granite upside-down ziggurat. Through Dec. 8. . . . ¶ "NYNY: City of Ambition." An anthology of twentieth-century images of New York drawn mostly from the permanent collection, presented in an installation as bold, entertaining, and aggressive as the city itself. Through Oct. 27. . . . ¶ "Perpetual Mirage: Photographic Narratives of the Desert West," a library-style exhibit of books and prints from 1848 to the present. Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ "An American Story," a survey of twentieth-century paintings and sculptures, both well known and obscure, from the museum's collection. Through Oct. 6. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Okavango: Africa's Last Eden," thirty large color photographs by Frans Lanting, of the wildlife of the Okavango Delta, in Botswana. . . . ¶ Paintings and drawings by the American naturalist Titian Ramsay Peale (1799-1885). . . . ¶ An exhibition that explores the relationship between scientific research and its presentation in the media—specifically, the *Times*. Through Sept. 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Photography in Latin America: A Spiritual Journey," a selection of more than a hundred pictures from the museum's collection. Among the forty-two artists represented (most of whom are women) are Manuel and Lola Alvarez Bravo, Graciela Iturbide, Batienne Schmidt, and Javier Silva Meinel. Through Jan. 19. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—"Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture" takes a look at the evolution in the field over the past fifteen years, with examples that include T-shirts, Web pages, TV spots, posters, magazines, and more. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

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The Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"The Illegal Camera." The Nazi occupation of the Netherlands is best known to most of us through Anne Frank's diary, but another secret record of the era was made by Dutch photographers, both professional and amateur; a selection of their work has been gathered in this stunning exhibition. Through Dec. 1. . . . ¶ "From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power, 1600-1800" presents two hundred and seventy paintings, sculptures, illuminated manuscripts, and ceremonial objects that tell the story of Jewish appointed officials—diplomats, financiers, minters, arms purveyors, art dealers—in the Germanic courts of Europe. Through Jan. 19. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

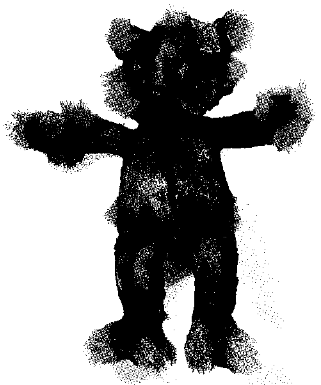
The New Museum, 583 Broadway, between Houston and Prince Sts.—"alt.youth.media" is a bunch of interactive rec rooms full of E-zines, print zines, CD-ROMs, short videos, and d.j. audio mixes. Free headphones are provided. Slammin'. Through Nov. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 6. . . . **NOTE:** For the run of this show, admission is free to visitors 21 and under.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W.—The exhibition "Privy to History" features artifacts, photographs, and documents relating to an excavated eighteen-seventies outhouse that belonged to an Irish family on Broome Street. Through Sept. 21. . . . ¶ Photographs, prints, furniture, books, and other objects are on view in "Becoming Eleanor Roosevelt: The New York Years, 1884-1933." Through Nov. 24. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—Part II of "The Hand of the Poet" presents original manuscripts by the likes of Cummings, Moore, Merrill, Auden, Bishop, Lowell, Moss, Nabokov, and Sexton. (Berg Collection.) . . . ¶ "Headlines, Deadlines, Bylines: The New York *Times* Morgue, 1896-1996." Through Oct. 18. (Salomon Room.) . . . ¶ A rotating selection of drawings by Charles Addams, most of which appeared in these pages. Through Jan. 25. (Third Floor Gallery.) (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Rd., Long Island City—Works from every period in the career of the Japanese-American sculptor (1904-88) are installed in a garden and in open-air galleries carved from, and added to, an old photo-engraving factory. While it's all of interest—early gold-plated brass works, cast-bronze models for unrealized playgrounds, Japanese paper lanterns adapted for electricity—stone is the core medium. Its names alone (jasper, serpentine, Languedoc marble, red Persian travertine) are sensuous, and the stone sculptures rise among the birches, ivy, brick, and steel of Queens like indigenous art—relics of a civilization. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6. Through Oct. 31.)

Wallach Art Gallery, Schermerhorn Hall, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St.—"The Fragrance of Ink: Korean Literati Paintings of the Choson Dynasty (1392-1920)," a travelling exhibition of sixty-two scrolls, album leaves, fans, and screens from the Korea University Museum, in Seoul. Through Sept. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 1 to 5.)



"Beastie" and "Santa," in "Burnt Offerings," by Gregory Lee Pickard, at Bridges and Bodell.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, uptown and downtown galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; Chelsea galleries are open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Alan Bray—This faux-naïf Maine artist paints luminous imaginary landscapes that take a while to sink in. The best, such as a stormy lake with finely detailed lapping waves and a blue, heavy mood, recall ukiyo-e prints. But some tightly focussed canvases of woodland scenes, rendered in exaggeratedly bright colors, are more pretentious than portentous. Through Sept. 28. (Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St.)

David Smith (1906-65)—This magnificent suite of works on paper was executed in 1963, on a thirty-day working visit to the Northern Italian town of Voltri (during which the artist also completed twenty-seven sculptures). The pieces most closely related to Smith's sculpture are the spray paintings: he placed found objects, including oddments from his studio, on paper and sprayed them with pigment, creating vibrant forms that anticipate the retinal energy of seventies graffiti art. Even more gorgeous is a series of landscapes in green egg ink, ranging from elegant hillsides rendered in a few deft strokes to near-abstractions reminiscent of Franz Kline. Through Oct. 5. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St.)

"Giorgio de Chirico and America"—A selection of paintings, works on paper, and fashion illustrations which attempts to reëxamine this country's critical reception of de Chirico (1888-1978), especially with regard to his later work. Through Oct. 26. (Hunter College Gallery, Lexington Ave. at 68th St. Open Mondays; opens at noon.)

"Pastels"—Works in the medium by ten artists, among them Janet Fish, Yvonne Jacquette, Wolf Kahn, Lucas Samaras, and Wayne Thiebaud. Through Oct. 5. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

"Shit"—Excreta used in many different ways, by such artists as Piero Manzoni, Sam Goodman, Not Vital, Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Dieter Rot, and Rachel Harrison. Through Nov. 16. (Baron/Boisanté, 50 W. 57th St.)

Group Show—Abstract paintings by Bernd Naber, Jamie Dalglish, and Maureen E. Dougherty. Through Sept. 21. (Baczynsky, 58 E. 79th St.)

Short List—**JAN ARONSON,** Wächter, 111 E. 65th St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **JAKE BERTHOT** and **HARVEY QUAYTMAN,** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Both shows through Oct. 1. . . . **LORENZO CARDI,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. Open Mondays; through Oct. 12. . . . **LEONARDO DREW,** Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through Oct. 19. . . . **LESTER JOHNSON,** Cadé, 1045 Madison Ave., at 79th St. Through Oct. 30. . . . **GEROME KAMROWSKI,** Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. Through Oct. 19. . . . **YAYOI KUSAMA,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through Oct. 19. . . . **MARKUS LÜPERTZ,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. Open Mondays; through Oct. 26. . . . **GABRIEL OROZCO,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays; through Oct. 12. . . . **ALEXANDER RODCHENKO AND VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY,** Schickler, 52 E. 76th St. Open Mondays; through Oct. 31. . . . **JOHN RUSKIN,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. Open Mondays; through Sept. 28. . . . **MARGARETT SARGENT,** Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. Open Mondays; through Oct. 5.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Scott Lifshutz / Marc Brandenburg—An amusing series of portraits by the principal organizer of the Wigstock festival. Disembodied heads float like the Wizard of Oz on pastel squares—smiley faces made flesh. There may be some meaning lurking here, but it's not quite as deep as Miss "Lady" Bunny's makeup, and it doesn't spoil the fun. / The most hyphenated artist of the moment is the mixed-race, German-born, Texas-raised, gay draftsman-sculptor Marc Brandenburg. Using colored paper as his ground, he has made beautifully finished pencil drawings of everything from sex to sports figures to an electric chair to Twiggy and tacked them up randomly to resemble a teen-age girl's memory wall. The sculptures include colorful hand-knitted sweaters with masks based on S & M gear and a drag paper doll called Afrodite Jones (imagine Jan Brady as a very bad girl). Through Oct. 6. (Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St.)

"American Dreamin'"—Sculptures, paintings, drawings, and audio works about guns, cars, drugs, sex, and religion. The perpetrators are Lutz Bacher, Mary Beth Edelson, Gregory Green, Cannon Hudson, Kim Jones, Tom Sachs, Fred Tomaselli, and the band Curdlefur. Through Oct. 13. (Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St.)

"The Speed of Painting"—New works by Laura Owens, Steven Parrino, Monique Prieto, and Scott Reeder. Through Oct. 13. (Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St.)

"Women's Work"—A wide range of large paintings, sculptures, and photographs by, among others, Lynda Benglis, Louise Bourgeois, Nan Goldin, Cady Noland, Cindy Sherman, Kiki Smith, and Nancy Spero. Through Oct. 13. (Greene/Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Short List—**PAUL D. MILLER,** Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays; through Oct. 12. . . . **DANI TULL,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. Through Oct. 13.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Martin Kersels—Photographs, a video, a film loop, and a motorized audio sculpture, by an inspired Los Angeles oddball. From 1984 to 1992, Kersels belonged to a performance group called the Shrimps, whose signature awkward movements still influence his work. In previous videos and photographs, he has exploited his mass (he's six-seven and weighs more than three hundred pounds) for both comic and poignant effects, tripping himself in the streets or falling lifelessly to the ground. In his first New York solo show, he has engaged other people as well. For the photo series "Tossing a Friend," he asked six friends to allow him to do just that—the pictures typically show them in midair. A weird yet delightful exhibition. Through Oct. 19. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

Paul McCarthy—"Yaa-Hoo," an ambitious installation on a Wild West theme by the influential Los Angeles artist. McCarthy's background is in performance, but in recent years he has been integrating videos of his antics with elaborately constructed sets. For this installation he has engineered a hyperkinetic mise en scène and dispensed with his own mess-everything-up persona. A wooden

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bunkhouse shifts position on mechanized tracks; life-size plastic automatons, often amalgams of human and animal body parts, engage in a hilarious variety of sexually explicit acts; a sorry-looking male-female figure beats feebly on a tomtom. (The show's very noisy, too.) Through Oct. 12. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St.)

Gregory Lee Pickard—"Burnt Offerings," stuffed animals that have been eviscerated, filled with concrete, and then blowtorched, like a zooful of cartoon characters who mistook sticks of dynamite for dinner. They would be disturbing if they hadn't survived the abuse cuter than ever. Their melted eyes and singed fur suggest melancholy and disappointment, but you get the sense that they'd do it all over again just to get that laugh. Through Oct. 6. (Bridges and Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 1 to 7.)

"Mutate/Loving the New Flesh"—A lively group show that takes its cues from both popular culture (the title is a reference to David Cronenberg's horror movie "Videodrome") and arcane theory, in particular Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's book "The Anti-Oedipus." Curator Michael Cohen (whose work is included in the show) suggests that the artists here greet the sight of roiling viscera with an enthusiastic "Great!" rather than the conventional "Ick." An element of teen-age gross-out animates the sensibilities of some of the contributors, but the best work has a bizarre elegance that honors the mandate of the title with an unmistakable formal beauty. For anyone who has been following Charles Long's work, his "Her Plane"—a resin-covered glass door (or table, as it is displayed here) out of which anemone-like appendages flower tumorously—is a must-see. Through Oct. 5. (Wittels, 48 Greene St.)

Short List—**polly apfelbaum,** Boesky & Callery, 51 Greene St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **larry bell,** Art et Industrie, 52 Thompson St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **robert cumming,** Borden, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 12. . . . **jackie ferrara,** Klein, 40 Wooster St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **lee garrett,** Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **peter hristoff,** Beitzel, 102 Prince St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **david jeffrey,** Kramarsky, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 12. . . . **walter martin and paloma muñoz,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway. Through Oct. 5. . . . **jerry mischak,** Arstark, 568 Broadway. Through Oct. 19. . . . **alix pearlstein,** Postmasters, 80 Greene St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **lucio pozzi** and **susanna rubin,** Weber, 142 Greene St. Both shows through Oct. 12. . . . **sal scarpitta,** Grand Salon, 83 Grand St. Opens at noon; through Oct. 12. . . . **richard tuttle,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. Through Oct. 26. . . . **h. c. westermann,** Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 12.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—The city's auction houses begin the fall season with sales of Asian art. Sept. 17: Korean ceramics, sculptures, paintings, and armor. . . . ¶ Sept. 17-18: Chinese art. . . . ¶ Sept. 19: Art works from Nepal, Tibet, India, and Cambodia. . . . ¶ Sept. 20: Japanese art. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Christie's—The house offers a large collection of Chinese furniture, mostly sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ming dynasty. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000. Sept. 19.) . . . At Christie's East: A sale of sports memorabilia. The highlight of the sale's second day is an exceptionally fine specimen of the ultra-rare 1910 Honus Wagner T-206 baseball card; it's expected to sell for about half a million dollars. (219 E. 67th St. Sept. 20-21.)

Doyle's—A pair of jewelry auctions. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. Sept. 18-19 at 10.)

Armory Antiques Show—This show, the first of five that the Wendy organization will present at the armory this year, brings together a hundred international dealers. (Seventh Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 67th St. Sept. 18-22. For information, call 472-1180.)

"Grand Street, Brooklyn, New York" (1947), in "Henri Cartier-Bresson in America, 1935-1975" (Equitable).

© CARTIER-BRESSON/MAGNUM PHOTOS

Morell's—The usual assortment of fine Bordeaux, Burgundies, and notable California wines, along with such accessories as antique decanters and corkscrews. (Union League Club, 38 E. 37th St. Sept. 21 at 10.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Richard Misrach—Digging around in the arid West for nearly two decades, Misrach has become our most perceptive cultural archeologist. The often stunning color prints in the eighteen series that he calls "Desert Cantos" overflow with echoes of history and signs of human folly, as well as with hard evidence of our defilement of the earth. Seventeen contemplative selections—lakes, floods, terrain, skies—form a strong installation at Robert Mann (42 E. 76th St.; through Nov. 2). At Curt Marcus (578 Broadway; through Oct. 5), works from "The Playboys" and "The Paintings" hang on either side of the gallery, mirroring each other. The charged issues in both are violence, oppression, and cultural values—adroitly explored and painfully seductive.

Olivia Parker / Pierre Molinier (1900-1976)—A photographic installation that includes silver-gelatin, ink-jet, and dye-sublimation prints. Through Oct. 5. / Fetishistic photographs and collages, often sexually explicit. Through Nov. 9. (Wooster Gardens, 558 Broadway. . . . **note:** A concurrent show of Molinier's photomontages is at Ubu, 16 E. 78th St., through Oct. 22.)

"Collection in Context"—Photographs of hands, from 1947 to the present, from the collection of Henry Buhl. Among the artists represented are Robert Frank, Irving Penn, Cindy Sherman, Gregory Crewdson, Chuck Close, and Barbara Kruger. Through Oct. 19. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway.)

"Eyewitness 1996"—The best press photographs of 1995, selected by the World Press Photo Foundation. Through Oct. 3. (North Bridge, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Open daily, twenty-four hours.)

"Henri Cartier-Bresson in America, 1935-1975"—More than a hundred works, selected by the photographer; nearly half of them are from 1946-1947. Starts Sept. 19. (Equitable, Seventh Ave. at 51st St. Open Mondays; opens Saturdays at noon.)

"Precisionist Poetics" / "Naked"—Seventies abstract photography with an urban bent, by four artists: Lewis Baltz, Michael Bishop, Ray Metzker, and Grant Mudford. / The exposed human body, from Nadar to Mapplethorpe. There are offerings in between from Arbus, Bellocq, Brandt, Friedlander, Hosoe, Weston, Witkin, and others. Both shows through Oct. 26. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—"CHIM: The Photographs of David Seymour," a retrospective of works by one of the founders of Magnum Photos. Included are images of the Spanish Civil War, a study of children in Europe after the Second World War, coverage of the establishment of Israel, and portraits of twentieth-century notables. Through Nov. 3. . . . ¶ Portraits, views of New York City, and science photographs by Berenice Abbott, all from the center's permanent collection. Through Nov. 3. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**frédéric brenner,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. Through Sept. 28. . . . **jeff burton,** Kaplan, 48 Greene St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **robert capa,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. Through Oct. 18. . . . **ricardo de oliveira,** Bonakdar, 130 Prince St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **philip-lorca di corcia** and **harry callahan,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. Through Oct. 19. . . . **michael eastman,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through Oct. 19. . . . **patrick faigenbaum,** Gladstone, 99 Greene St. Through Oct. 5. . . . **ralph gibson,** Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens Saturdays at noon; through Oct. 16. . . . **lewis hine,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **rudolf koppitz,** Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. Through Oct. 19. . . . **annie leibovitz,** Danziger, 130 Prince St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **chema madoz,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway. Through Oct. 5. . . . **josefa mulaire,** Postmasters, 80 Greene St. Through Oct. 12. . . . **jerry schatzberg,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 12. . . . **john schlesinger,** Saul, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 12. . . . **valerie shaff,** Bridgewater/Lustberg, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 12. . . . **wolfgang tillmans,** Rosen, 130 Prince St. Through Oct. 26. . . . **roman vishniac,** Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. Through Sept. 28. . . . **frederic weber** and **alvin booth,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. Through Oct. 12.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the American Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Jewish Museum.)

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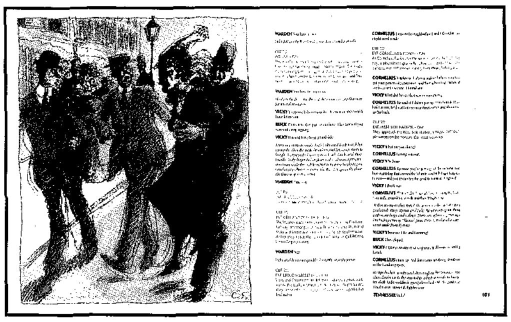

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CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

New York City Opera—**DER ROSENKAVALIER.** (Sept. 19 at 8.) . . . **H.M.S. PINAFORE.** (Sept. 20 at 8.) . . . **FALSTAFF,** with bass Sherrill Milnes in the title role. (Sept. 21 at 1:30.) . . . **LA BOHÈME.** (Sept. 21 at 8 and Sept. 24 at 8.) . . . **MADAMA BUTTERFLY.** (Sept. 22 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Amato Opera Company—Presenting "Lucia di Lammermoor." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Sept. 21 at 7:30 and Sept. 22 at 2:30. Through Oct. 6.)

ORCHESTRAS

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Kurt Masur conducting. Sept. 18 at 7:30: *Opening night of the orchestra's hundred and fifty-fourth season features performances of Brahms's Violin Concerto (with Anne-Sophie Mutter) and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4.* . . . ¶ Sept. 19-21 at 8 and Sept. 24 at 7:30: Though Georg Katzer's music isn't well known in the United States, it is highly regarded in Germany, where the composer was born, in 1935, and refined his craft under such distinguished mentors as Rudolf Wagner-Régeny and Hanns Eisler. Mr. Masur has championed and recorded several of Katzer's scores, some of which have been released in this country by Berlin Classics (the premier purveyor of East Germany's performance legacy). The Philharmonic's subscription series opens with Katzer's "Sound-House After a Vision of Francis Bacon," a 1979 composition inspired by a passage in Bacon's early-seventeenth-century utopian treatise "New Atlantis," which proposes, with eerie foresight, the fanciful idea of "sound-houses" in which all imaginable sounds are bantered about, transformed through "Strange and Artificial Echo's," and even conveyed over distances "in trunks and pipes, in strange lines." Katzer's intricate twenty-three-minute score for orchestra and tape explores the musical implications of Bacon's fantasy. Also on the program are Mozart's C-Minor Piano Concerto (K. 491, with Vladimir Feltsman) and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4. (875-5030.)

Philadelphia Orchestra—Although Carnegie Hall's official opening night isn't until Oct. 3, the season actually gets under way with this performance, in which Wolfgang Sawallisch conducts William Schuman's "New England Triptych," Mozart's D-Minor Piano Concerto (with Rudolf Buchbinder), and three concert overtures by Dvořák: "In Nature's Realm," "Carnival," and "Othello." (247-7800. Sept. 24 at 8.)

RECITALS

Bargemusic—As 1890 drew to an end, Brahms was bone tired. Though he was only fifty-seven, he told his friends that he planned to complete a couple of works already in progress and then call it quits as a composer. But in March, 1891, he visited Meiningen, where he was so revitalized by the playing of the ducal orchestra's first clarinettist, Richard Mühlfeld, that within a year he had produced his A-Minor Clarinet Trio and B-Minor Clarinet Quintet, and within three years his two Clarinet Sonatas. Posterity has Mühlfeld to thank for these autumnal masterpieces as well as for the other works (including his collections of piano pieces Opp. 116-119) that the composer created once the juices started flowing again. On this program of trios, Brahms's Clarinet Trio shares the program with Stravinsky's trio arrangement (for violin, clarinet, and piano) of movements from "L'Histoire du Soldat" and Mozart's G-Major Piano Trio (K. 496). On the performing roster: clarinettist Charles Neidich, violinist Carmit Zori, cellist Fred Sherry, and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Sept. 19 at 7:30 and Sept. 22 at 4.)

Tom Chiu and Tomas Bächli—Violinist and pianist, in music by Mozart and the mid-twentieth-century modernists Erich Itor Kahn and Erich Schmid. (St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. Sept. 20 at 8. Admission by contribution.)

New Juilliard Ensemble—Joel Sachs conducts Gerald Barry's "Of Queen's Gardens," Alexander Goehr's "A Musical Offering," Nicholas Maw's "Shahnama," Bright Sheng's "Two Poems from the Sung Dynasty" (featuring soprano Johanna Wiseman), and the première of Jia Daqun's "Intonation (1990-95)." (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Sept. 21 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

Music by Eleanor Hovda—The second installment of Merkin Concert Hall's Zoom series opens with a performance of music by and a conversation with this Minnesota-born composer. The program comprises her "Beginnings" and "Crossings in a Mountain Dream," both played by Libby Van Cleve (performing on various oboes) and Jack Vees (guitar and electric bass). The second piece also involves six dancers from the Nancy Meehan Dance Company (with choreography by Ms. Meehan). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. Sept. 21 at 9. Admission by contribution.)

Eric Grossman—The violinist performs Bartók's Unaccompanied Sonata; colleagues assist in works by Vivaldi. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. Sept. 22 at noon.)

Kent Tritle—The organist plays works by Bach, Julian Reubke, Larry King, and Widor. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. Sept. 22 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

Salon Soirées—Violinist Laura Frautschi and pianist Ilan Rechtman perform Debussy's Violin Sonata, and cellist Iris Regev joins them for Mendelssohn's D-Minor Piano Trio. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Sept. 22 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Salon Chamber Soloists—The ensemble (which comprises violinist Eriko Sato, violist Lois Martin, cellist Maria Kitsopoulos, and pianist David Oei) inaugurates a chamber-music series at The Culture Project, an Upper East Side arts center. In this concert, the group offers Britten's Suite for Violin and Piano, Schubert's F-Minor Fantasia (for piano four-hands, with Yuri Kim assisting Mr. Oei), and Fauré's G-Minor Piano Quartet. (The Salon, 432 E. 91st St. Sept. 23 at 8. Admission by contribution.)

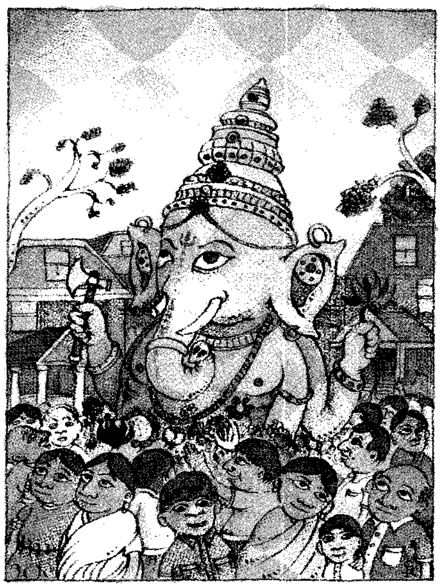
ABOVE AND BEYOND

Fish Tales—To celebrate its fiftieth year in the business, the publishing house of Farrar, Straus and Giroux rounds up its stable of beribboned authors for two nights of readings. Sept. 18 at 6: Poetry night—John Ashbery, Frank Bidart, James Fenton, Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon, Robert Pinsky, and Derek Walcott, among others, read from their work. . . . ¶ Sept. 19 at 6: Grace Paley, Susan Sontag, Calvin Trillin, Scott Turow, Tom Wolfe, and the like step up to the mike for the prose portion. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 307-7171.) . . . ¶ The imprint has commissioned fifty interpretations of its venerable logo, the three fish that adorn spine and title page; the new versions are on display at the American Institute of Graphic Arts, 164 Fifth Ave., at 21st St., through Sept. 25.

Whigstock—Sept. 21 at 11: Historian Fred Cookinham makes a reconnaissance of the uptown battlegrounds of the Revolutionary War, scouting the remaining traces of the battles of Harlem Heights and Fort Washington. For more information, call the Morris-Jumel Mansion at 923-8008.

Readings—Sept. 18 at 8: Poet Joanna Rakoff reads from her work, and novelist Joel Rose reads from his latest, "Kill Kill Faster Faster." (alt.coffee, 139 Avenue A. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 19 at 7: Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney reads his poetry. (Queens College, Kissena Blvd. and Melbourne Ave., Flushing. 1-718 997-4646. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ Sept. 20 at 6:30: Akosua Busia reads from her first novel, "The Seasons of Beento Blackbird." (Nkiru Books, 76 St. Marks Ave., at Sixth Ave., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—Sept. 18 at 6:30: Amy Sylvester Katoh, proprietor of a Tokyo shop with an inventory consisting solely of blue-and-white fabrics and ceramics, brings in a few of these *chiarazzuro* objects, from simple horse trappings to more unusual tiles and glassware. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 732-3015.) . . . ¶ Sept. 18 at 7:30: Jurists (Judge Kimba Wood and sex-crimes prosecutor Linda Fairstein) and journalists (Court TV's Fred Graham and *The New Yorker's* Jeffrey Toobin) discuss the effects of the O. J. Simpson trial on the legal system. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) . . . ¶ Sept. 20 at 7: Ben Katchor, the creator of the comic strip "Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer," shows slides chronicling the adventures of his peripatetic protagonist. (Tower Books, 383 Lafayette St. No tickets necessary.)



CHARIOT OF THE GOD:

The festival of Ganesh Chaturthi, continuing through September 22, in Flushing, Queens.

SERGIO RUZZIER

Trunkspotting—Ganesh, the Hindu god of clear passage and new beginnings, has quite a week ahead of him. September 14 marked the start of Ganesh Chaturthi, a holiday honoring the portly elephant deity (the big ears denote his willingness to listen to others). The Hindu Temple Society (45-57 Bowne St., Flushing; 1-718 460-8484) lights a ceremonial fire for Ganesh, and for the following eight days the society adorns his statue with flowers and coconut flakes and bathes several smaller likenesses in nourishing milks and honeys. (The temple is open throughout the festival to all who wish to come in and observe.) The celebration culminates on September 22, when a procession follows a jewel-spangled chariot conveying the statue through the streets of Flushing. "In India, Ganesh is carried by hand," Uma Mysorekar, the president of the Temple Society, reports. "Here in Queens, we use a truck." Those interested in learning about less numinous aspects of Indian life can join a tour offered by the South Street Seaport Museum on Thursday, September 19, which will include visits to a beauty parlor, a sari shop, and a jewelry store; for more information, call the museum at 748-8590.

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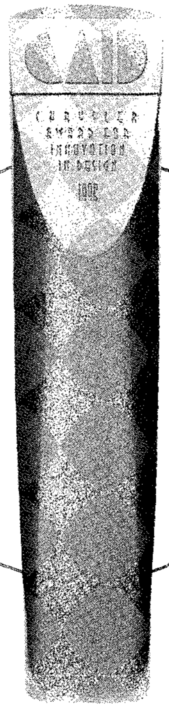

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Type designer Matthew Carter began his career in the last days of manual typography and has been reconciling type design with changing technologies ever since. Mr. Carter's many outstanding typefaces include: Galliard, Helvetica Compressed, and Bell Centennial.

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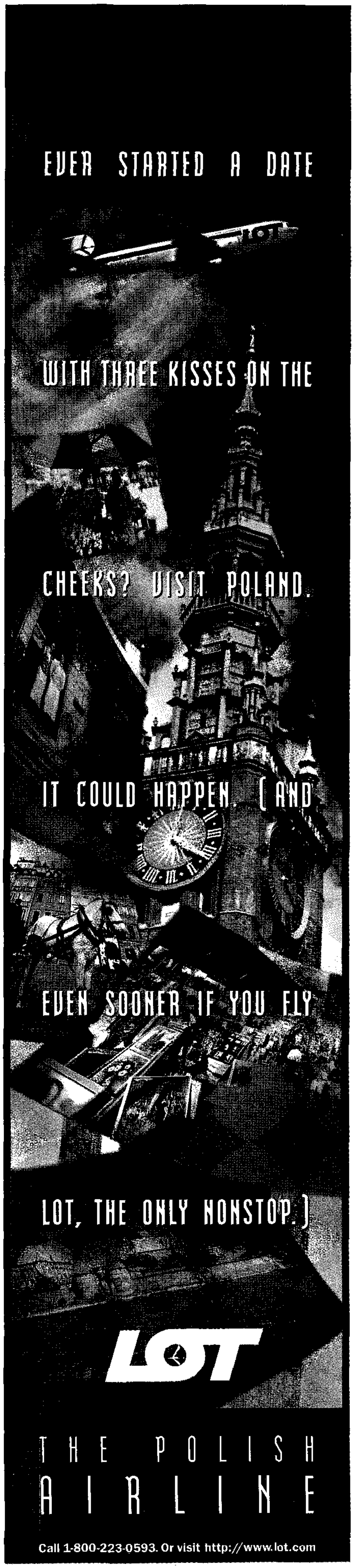
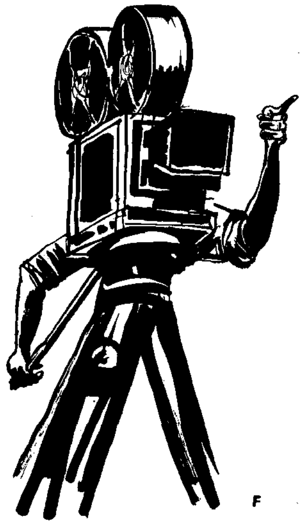




THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Big Night—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening September 20. (Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6.)

Dadetown—A story about a small town in upstate New York. Directed by Russ Hexter, who co-wrote the screenplay with John Housley. Opening September 18. (Film Forum.)

The First Wives Club—Bette Midler, Goldie Hawn, and Diane Keaton star in Hugh Wilson's adaptation of Olivia Goldsmith's 1992 novel about three women who take revenge on the husbands who have left them for younger women. Robert Harling wrote the screenplay. Opening September 20. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Hustler White—A comedy set among male prostitutes on Santa Monica Boulevard. Written and directed by Bruce LaBruce and Rick Castro. Opening September 20. (Quad Cinema.)

Last Man Standing—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening September 20. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Gotham Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills—A documentary by Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky, about a trio of Arkansas teenagers accused of killing three eight-year-old boys in 1993. Opening September 20. (Quad Cinema.)

Surviving Picasso—Anthony Hopkins plays the artist and Natascha McElhone his mistress Françoise Gilot, in a drama directed by James Ivory. Written by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Opening September 20. (Paris.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and James Wolcott. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 30.)

American Buffalo—David Mamet's angry, acid play, first performed in 1975, has finally been brought to the screen by the director Michael Corrente, whose reverence for the original is such that his movie still feels like a play. There's no hum of background life here, nobody passing on the street—only a testy stalemate between the three principals: Dennis Franz as a junk-shop owner, Dustin Hoffman as his disillusioned friend, and Sean Nelson as the young gofer who wants to join them in a crime. Apart from one cloudburst of violence at the end, the characters do little except talk. Mamet's ear for baffled musings was never sharper, and Hoffman casts off his habitual plaintiveness for something more dour and dirty, but the film feels cramped and airless. Corrente's closeups are so unrelenting that you half expect the actors to reach out and slug the camera.—A.L. (9/16/96) (Cinema II, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

American Strays—Three vignettes written and directed by Michael Covert, about violence in the American West. With John Savage, Luke Perry, and James Russo. (Village East Cinemas.)

Basquiat—Making his début as a movie director, the painter Julian Schnabel offers a fond portrait of his fellow-artist Jean-Michel Basquiat (Jeffrey Wright), who died in 1988 from a heroin overdose. It isn't hard to read his career as a cautionary New York tale; the movie, however, is helplessly in love with him, and Schnabel never dreams of questioning his art. The film is best viewed as a freakish social comedy, its levity assured by a fine cast: the sweet-natured Wright, Benicio del Toro (forever strange) as Basquiat's best friend, and a suitably zonked David Bowie as Andy Warhol.—A.L. (8/19/96) (Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Regency.)

Bogus—A foster mother (Whoopi Goldberg) finds that she must deal with her seven-year-old charge's imaginary friend (Gérard Depardieu). Directed by Norman Jewison. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Village Theatre VII.)

Brother of Sleep—André Eisermann plays a nineteenth-century Austrian composer, Dana Vávrová the woman he loves, and Ben Becker her brother and his best friend, in a film adapted by Robert Schneider from his 1992 novel and directed by Joseph Vilsmaier. In German. (Carnegie Hall Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Bulletproof—Former best friends—one (Adam Sandler) a crook, one (Damon Wayans) a cop—join forces to thwart both the mob and the police. Directed by Ernest Dickerson. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, National Twin, Orpheum VII, and 34th Street Showplace.)

The Crow: City of Angels—Vincent Perez plays a young man who returns from the dead with remarkable powers, in a thriller directed by Tim Pope. (Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas.)

Emma—Douglas McGrath wrote and directed this charming, wrongheaded version of Jane Austen's great comedy of manipulation. Gwyneth Paltrow plays the heroine, and Jeremy Northam makes an absurdly young Mr. Knightley. He and Paltrow are a lovely couple, but McGrath replaces Austen's notion that love takes them by surprise—evolving, as it were, out of intellectual sparring—with easy romance. Ideal viewing for those who like to believe that Jane Austen was, above all, nice.—A.L. (8/5/96) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, 86th Street East Twin, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

Feeling Minnesota—Keanu Reeves and Vincent D'Onofrio star as estranged brothers at odds over a tough young woman (Cameron Diaz), in a black comedy written and directed by Steven Baigelman. (Cinema I, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

Fly Away Home—Anna Paquin (of "The Piano") plays Amy, a thirteen-year-old whose mother has died in a car crash; she is farmed out to her estranged father (Jeff Daniels), who invents flying machines and other oddities in the wilds of Ontario. At first, the two of them barely speak—Amy reserves her love for a gaggle of orphaned goose chicks, which she raises as if they were her own. That the film escapes cuteness to become genuinely affecting is a tribute both to Paquin's stubborn enthusiasm and to the peculiar briskness of the director, Carroll Ballard. His movie is much too busy to linger over its considerable beauty: the characters prefer to work out their wounded emotions in furious activity.

(When the birds grow up and need to migrate, Amy and her father go with them, leading the way in tiny aircraft.) Ballard has re-created the old-fashioned, uncondescending magic with which he infused "The Black Stallion." Like the young Spielberg, he convinces you that a flight of fancy can be the best way to travel.—A.L. (9/16/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Gemini, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Girls Town—Lili Taylor is an underachieving unwed mother, Bruklin Harris a poet stuck in a strict home, and Anna Grace a bright teenager toying with delinquency, in Jim McKay's low-budget but ambitious look at the coming-of-age of adolescent girls. The three women worked together for months to create a casual documentary naturalness; unfortunately, the script they came up with (in collaboration with McKay and Denise Casano) is awfully literal in its take on the brutalization of young women in this country.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center.)

Grace of My Heart—For about half its length, Allison Anders' ode to the sixties' Brill Building composers is an innocuous good time. Illeana Douglas, as a Carole King-like songwriter, is surrounded by some hip performers in thinly veiled musician roles: Patsy Kensit, Eric Stoltz, and a cool John Turturro in a Phil Spector wig and goatee. The story follows the saucer-eyed songwriter's rise on the New York scene, and the sequences that show her work being cut by groups that are supposed to represent the Drifters and the Shirelles have a hokey kick. The movie dies, however, when she moves to California and marries a Brian Wilson-like musician (Matt Dillon). The script turns serious, and the pop fizz fades away.—B.D. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

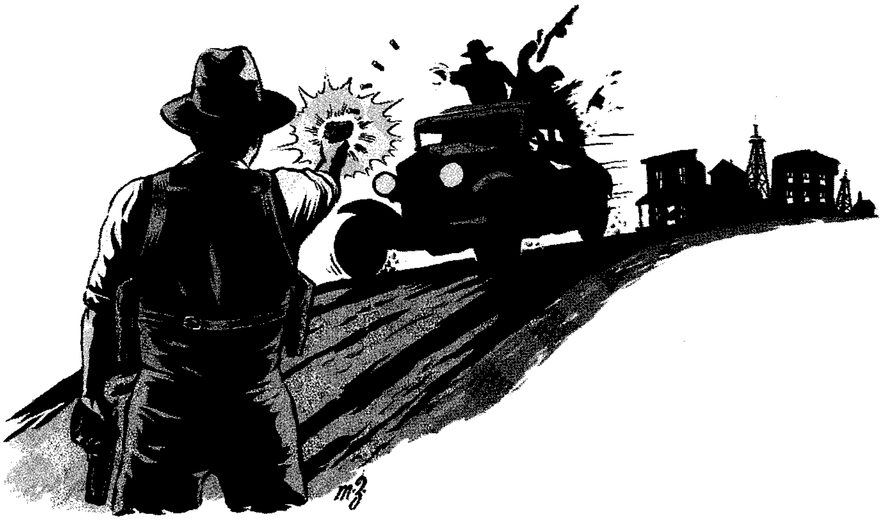
Independence Day—The big summer alien-invasion movie, in which the German director Roland Emmerich delivers the populist message that the land of the free is still a scrappy, defiant, can-do country. Bill Pullman plays the Clintonesque President; Jeff Goldblum has the geek-elegant role of a cable-television technician turned scientific savior; Will Smith is a Marine fighter pilot who captures the first alien with a punch to the head. At the end, millions are dead and the battered survivors stand around grinning as if they've just won a volleyball game. This shallowness is scarier than anything in the movie. The film gives the audience what it craves: spectacular nothing.—J.W. (7/15/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, National Twin, and Waverly.)

Kansas City—Robert Altman's movie is set in the nineteen-thirties, in the jazz clubs of the town where the director grew up. An angry-looking broad named Blondie (Jennifer Jason Leigh) discovers that her husband, a petty crook, is being held by Seldom Seen (Harry Belafonte), a club proprietor and gangland chief. In retaliation, she kidnaps a politician's wife (Miranda Richardson) and drags her around the city, trailed by a small crowd of subplots. Unfortunately, the movie is killed by its two female leads, who seem to be involved in some twitch-and-frown competition of their own. It's a relief when they take a break and allow Altman to concentrate on the jazz.—A.L. (8/19/96) (Baronet. . . . ¶ Lincoln Plaza Cinemas; through Sept. 19.)

Lone Star—The setting is Frontera, a small Texas town on the Mexican border, once policed by Sheriff Buddy Deeds (Matthew McConaughey) and now overseen by his son Sam (Chris Cooper). The writer-director, John Sayles, shifts between the two eras with gracious ease, linking them with an old crime—the unsolved and unmourned killing of Buddy's predecessor, Charley Wade (Kris Kristofferson), who held sway through bigotry and corruption. Thanks to Kristofferson's scary and unyielding performance, the murder mystery becomes the core of the film. Elsewhere you can sense the strain as Sayles works away at the generation gaps, but by the end you're grateful for the movie's weight and substance—rare virtues in a flimsy summer.—A.L. (7/8/96) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 68th St. Playhouse.)

MARK ZINGARELLI

Maborosi—The Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda's simple, quiet story of a young woman's slow awakening from grief is impeccably lit, and the actors underplay beautifully. The hushed quality—the scenes are more photographed than directed (and occasionally you may feel tempted to kick the camera to get it moving)—gives the drama little room to play out. Instead, the film builds an emotional momentum; at times it seems as though Kore-eda is photographing sadness itself. His images are resonant and evocative (a long shot of mourners walking along the shore against an evening sky suggests Japanese characters on a page), and the poetry of the film is hard to shake. In Japanese.—B.D. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)



Opening September 20, Walter Hill's "Last Man Standing."

Madagascar Skin—A love story about a shy young gay man (John Hannah) and a straight older thief (Bernard Hill), written and directed by Chris Newby. (Quad Cinema.)

Maximum Risk—Jean-Claude Van Damme battles Russian mobsters in New York City, in an action picture directed by Ringo Lam. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

Rendezvous in Paris—Eric Rohmer's new film is a characteristically elegant diversion, consisting of three short stories about young lovers in Paris. The seventy-six-year-old filmmaker has made it his peculiar business, over the years, to dramatize the pleasures of unconsummated love, and this picture demonstrates—in triplicate—that no one makes nothing happen more seductively. In French.—T.R. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

The Rich Man's Wife—A thriller written and directed by Amy Holden Jones, starring Halle Berry as a widow whom the police suspect of having murdered her husband (Christopher McDonald). (84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 1, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

She's the One—The second movie by the twenty-eight-year-old writer and director Edward Burns is almost indistinguishable from his puzzlingly successful low-budget début feature, "The Brothers McMullen" (1995). Once again, he has made a romantic comedy on the theme that young Irish-American guys are utterly confounded by the opposite sex—a notion barely robust enough for a single movie. The addition of established actors (Jennifer Aniston, Cameron Diaz, and John Mahoney) to alumni of the "McMullen" cast (Maxine Bahns, Mike McGlone, and Burns himself) raises the overall skill level a notch; and the filmmaker gamely tries to adopt a brighter, more explicitly farcical tone. But it's no use: Burns has no talent for breeziness. And now that he's making major-studio pictures he no longer has any excuse for the stubborn ordinariness of his sensibility; it would take an awfully pliable imagination to romanticize this glossy, mildly amusing sitcom as the work of a vigorous and distinctive new comic artist.—T.R. (9/9/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, State, 34th St. East, and Village East Cinemas.)

Small Faces—This vibrant film by the Scottish brothers Billy and Gillies MacKinnon (they collaborated on the screenplay, with Gillies directing) concerns the coming-of-age of three adolescent brothers (Iain Robertson, Joseph McFadden, and J. S. Duffy) involved with Glaswegian gangs in 1968. The camera work is grippingly intense, and the little-known actors give nuanced, startling performances. Despite a contrived happy ending, it's a wonder of a film.—B.D. (Quad Cinema.)

The Spitfire Grill—Lee David Zlotoff's first film, a little-people fable set in a picturesque village in Maine, is chock full of uplift: it features redemption, martyrdom, reverent mountain vistas, and cross-generational female bonding. The mountains (which are really in Vermont) perform reliably, but everything else about the picture is solemnly berserk. Zlotoff—who also wrote the screenplay—somehow combines the sentimentality of a low-budget rural-virtue drama with the sleek calculation of a Lifetime cable movie, and several of the actors appear to be engaged in a competition for the most annoying Down East accent. Although a staggering amount of human potential gets realized here, the viewer remains unawed: this spiritual landscape looks phony and remote, like retouched mountains on a picture postcard. With Alison Elliott, Ellen Burstyn, Marcia Gay Harden, and Will Patton. The score is by James Horner, and for once his swollen, bathetic music feels not only appropriate but richly deserved.—T.R. (9/9/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Gemini, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Sweet Nothing—Michael Imperioli plays a young Bronx office worker who starts selling crack in order to help support the wife and kids, only to wind up a lowdown, lying user. This intelligent study is based on a real addict's diary; it's tightly, lovingly done, and Imperioli and Mira Sorvino (as his wife) strike just the right balance of fragility and obliviousness. Directed by Gary Winick, from a script by Lee Drysdale.—S.K. (Lincoln Square.)

Synthetic Pleasures—Iara Lee's documentary about better living through technology. (Cinema 3rd Avenue and Cinema Village.)

A Time to Kill—Joel Schumacher's Deep South courtroom thriller has the solemn tone of a Stanley Kramer social-problem drama. The script—by Akiva Goldsman, from a John

Grisham novel—follows a young white lawyer (Matthew McConaughey) as he defends a black man (Samuel L. Jackson) accused of murdering a couple of rednecks. The movie inflates Grisham's modest, perceptive portrait of a Mississippi town into a smug lecture on race relations; what the hero and all the other sweat-soaked characters really need is central air-conditioning, but what they get is an overpowering blast of homiletic hot air. Also with Sandra Bullock and Kevin Spacey.—T.R. (7/29/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . ¶ 72nd Street East; through Sept. 19.)

Tin Cup—In Ron Shelton's romantic comedy, Kevin Costner plays a once promising golfer who now runs a seedy West Texas driving range. The appearance at the lesson tee of a witty, leggy psychotherapist (Rene Russo) rouses him from his cozy stupor of underachievement: the way to impress her, he decides, is to qualify for the U.S. Open, and win it. Costner gives a terrific comic performance, and Russo makes a wonderful sparring partner. The movie is relaxed, funny, unpredictable, and very sexy. The sensational supporting cast includes Cheech Marin, Don Johnson, and Linda Hart.—T.R. (8/12/96) (Coronet, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Trainspotting—Why should people looking for a good time see a film about skinny, cynical heroin addicts in Edinburgh? Because the junkies themselves are having such a good time that what sounds grungy and depressing turns out to be weirdly uplifting. The performances feel driven and unashamed, and, though the film sells you short on plot, it makes you ravenous for the next visual fix. But in the end this approach becomes exhausting: you may yield to the film's verve while still praying that it will all be over soon. Directed by Danny Boyle; screenplay by John Hodge, from Irvine Welsh's novel.—A.L. (7/22/96) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Sutton.)

A Very Brady Sequel—Tim Matheson plays a thief who impersonates the dead first husband of Carol Brady (Shelley Long) in this second satire of the ludicrous TV series. There are, again, a few uncannily accurate moments—Gary Cole's imitation of Robert Reed's original Mike Brady, delivered in chipper, clipped inflections that suggest some sort of brain trauma, stands out—but the humor is less affectionate and a good deal more coarse. Directed by Arlene Sanford.—S.K. (Chelsea Cinemas, Embassy 3, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Walking and Talking—In Nicole Holofcener's fresh and accomplished début comedy, Catherine Keener plays Amelia, a thirtyish New Yorker; Anne Heche is her best friend, Laura, whose announcement that she's about to marry sends Amelia into a panic. Cinematically speaking, the movie is somewhat tame, but Holofcener's writing is trenchant and often hilarious, the actors are fine, and it's nice to see a movie about female friendship that doesn't stoop: at no point do the two women catfight over fame, money, or a man.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Welcome to the Dollhouse—Todd Solondz's low-budget independent movie pitilessly chronicles the indignities visited on an unpopular seventh grader by her vicious classmates and her grotesque family. The picture wallows in the details of her daily persecution without ever quite settling on a coherent attitude toward it. As the film grinds on, it grows steadily nastier and more hysterical: in one scene near the end, the filmmaker actually ridicules a mother's grief at the kidnapping of her youngest child.—T.R. (5/27/96) (Angelika Film Center and Cinema 3.)

ALSO PLAYING

ACROSS THE SEA OF TIME: Lincoln Square. . . . **COLD COMFORT FARM** (reviewed in our issue of 5/13/96): Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **COURAGE UNDER FIRE:** 62nd & Broadway. . . . **DEAD MAN:** The Screening Room. . . . **DOWN BY LAW:** The Screening Room. . . . **ERASER** (7/8/96): Manhattan Twin and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE FAN:** Criterion Center and Orpheum VII. . . . **FIRST KID:** 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Guild, 23rd St. Triplex, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **FLED:** Manhattan Twin and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **FLIRT:** Film Forum. . . . **THE FRIGHTENERS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME** (7/8/96): Embassy 4. . . . **THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU:** 84th Street Sixplex, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **JACK:** Metro Cinema. . . . **MATILDA:** Gemini. . . . **MAYBE . . . MAYBE NOT:** 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE** (6/3/96): Manhattan Twin and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE POSTMAN:** Angelika 57, Gotham Cinema, and Waverly. . . . **PURPLE NOON:** Paris. . . . **THE ROCK** (6/17/96): Embassy 4. . . . **SOLO:** Criterion Center. . . . **STRANGER THAN PARADISE:** The Screening Room. . . . **STRIPTEASE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **SUPERCOP:** Embassy 2. . . . **THE TRIGGER EFFECT:** Art Greenwich Twin and First & 62nd Cinemas. . . . **TWISTER** (5/20/96): Worldwide Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Baronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy I, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gemini, Second Ave. at 64th St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema I and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton I and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly I and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Alice Adams (1935)—Katharine Hepburn, with her young, beautiful angularity and her faintly absurd Bryn Mawr accent, is superbly cast as Booth Tarkington's eager, desperate, small-town social climber. Her Alice is one of the few authentic American movie heroines. George Stevens directed with such a fine sense of detail and milieu that the small-town nagging-family atmosphere is nerve-rackingly accurate and funny. The picture is cursed only by a fake happy ending, but even with this flaw it's a classic, and Hepburn gives one of her two or three finest performances.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 22.)

Blazing Saddles (1974)—Mel Brooks's comedy of chaos, with a surfeit of chaos and a scarcity of comedy. The story is about a modern black hipster (Cleavon Little) who becomes sheriff in a Western town in the eighteen-sixties; Gene Wilder and Madeline Kahn manage to redeem some of the film, but most of the cast (including Brooks himself) mug and smirk and shout insults at each other.—P.K. (Radio City Music Hall; Sept. 19.)

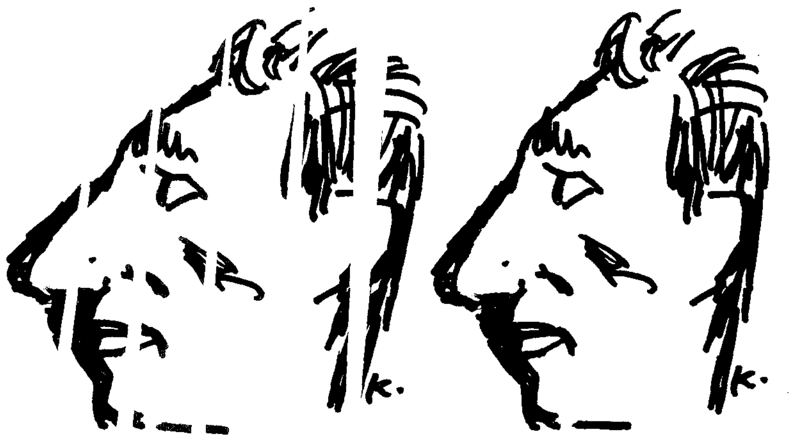
Bonnie and Clyde (1967)—A landmark movie, this account of the lives of the thirties outlaws Bonnie Parker (Faye Dunaway) and Clyde Barrow (Warren Beatty) keeps the audience in a state of eager, nervous imbalance; it holds our attention by throwing our disbelief back in our faces. The brutality that comes out of the innocent "just-folks" Barrow-family gang is far more shocking than the calculated brutalities of mean killers. Arthur Penn directed, from a screenplay by David Newman and Robert Benton, with some rewriting by Robert Towne (who is credited as special consultant). With Gene Hackman, Estelle Parsons, and Michael J. Pollard.—P.K. (Radio City Music Hall; Sept. 18.)

The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951)—Classy science fiction. Edmund H. North's script tells what happens when an alien named Klaatu (Michael Rennie), accompanied by an eight-foot robot named Gort (Lock Martin), lands a flying saucer in Washington, D.C., and issues a warning: "Join us and live in peace. Or pursue your present course and face obliteration." The director, Robert Wise, delivers the futuristic fantasy in a tense, realistic style: the saucer's descent and the panicky confrontations that follow are staged and shot in brisk, momentous newsreel fashion, heightened by Bernard Herrmann's first sci-fi-thriller score. Rennie lends an otherworldly suavity to Klaatu's quest for cosmic understanding, and the patch of light beneath Gort's visor is transfixing, like the single eye of a Cyclops. The human-interest subplot, entangling Klaatu with a pert, throaty widow (Patricia Neal) and her open-minded son (Billy Gray), gives youthful believers in spacemen easy emotional access to the drama. In some boomer circles, the command to Gort—"Klaatu baraada nikto"—is as beloved as "Here's looking at you, kid." The combination of uplift and suspense spawned a cheapjack 1954 British remake, "Stranger from Venus"; and it must have influenced Steven Spielberg's 1977 friendly-alien spectacle, "Close Encounters of the Third Kind."—M.S. (Film Forum 2; Sept. 18-19.)

The Magician (1958)—This Ingmar Bergman film isn't a masterwork, or even a very good movie, but it is clearly a film made by a master. The mysterious images of Max von Sydow as the nineteenth-century mesmerist, Volger, and Ingrid Thulin as his assistant, Aman (Volger's wife, Manda, in male disguise), carry so much latent charge of meaning that they dominate the loosely thrown-together material. The theme—magic versus rationalism, or, if one prefers, faith versus scepticism, or art versus science, or illusion versus reality—is treated too theatrically to sustain such heavy-breathing dialogue as "I always longed for a knife to cut away my tongue and my sex—to cut away all impurities." There are times when one would be happy to hand Bergman that knife. With Gunnar Björnstrand, Bibi Andersson, and

Erland Josephson. In Swedish.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 20 and Sept. 23.)

The Main Event (1979)—One of the most self-adoring of Barbra Streisand's star vehicles. She plays the head of a perfume company whose business manager absconds with the funds, leaving one financial asset: a fighter (Ryan O'Neal) whom Streisand has been supporting as some kind of tax write-off. He isn't really a fighter—he's plowed his money into a driving academy—but soon Streisand is shouting out instructions from a pugilists' handbook while he gets clobbered in the ring. As a light comedian, O'Neal earns the boxer's sobriquet, Kid Natural: he doesn't make a false move. But the movie is geared to showcasing Streisand as lovable, antic, savvy, glamorous, coy, and buff (her backside is filmed with the awe that a NASA photographer would lavish on another kind of moon shot). She gets her man, and no person or plot development is allowed to stand in her way. Gail Parent and Andrew Smith wrote the script; Howard Zieff directed; Jon Peters produced.—M.S. (A Different Light Bookstore; Sept. 22.)



Self-portrait by Ken Jacobs, whose works are being shown at MOMA.

The More the Merrier (1943)—It has a memorable, summer-night love scene: the very proper government-worker heroine (Jean Arthur) reluctantly sits down on the front steps of her apartment building with the inventor hero (Joel McCrea); they begin to neck, and she's embarrassed by what she feels. It's lovely: sexy and funny. The film is set in Washington, D.C., during the Second World War; the housing shortage results in their becoming part of an innocent ménage à trois with Charles Coburn, an elderly businessman who enjoys playing Cupid. Arthur overdoes her adorably prim act, but McCrea makes it all look easy—he's casually sophisticated, and as usual, he serves his co-stars, gets his laughs, and never hogs attention. Directed by George Stevens.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 22.)

The River (1951)—Jean Renoir's first color film, made in India, in English, was adapted by Renoir and Rumer Godden from Godden's novel about a British family in India and shot along the banks of the Ganges by Renoir's great cinematographer nephew, Claude Renoir. It's a poetic study of the contact of two civilizations. Renoir does not usurp the position of an insider; he sees India with Western eyes—eyes so sensitive and highly trained that his vision of India is a mythic poem set in the midst of the Indian river of life. Some people, accustomed to films edited for dramatic crescendo, dislike the serene flow—so much is going on that they feel nothing happens. There are static patches of dialogue, and some of the casting is questionable, but the theme (outsiders in a culture) meshes perfectly with the director's own position as a moviemaker in India, and visually the film is serenely yet passionately beautiful—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 22.)

Swing Time (1936)—In "The Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers Book," Arlene Croce calls it "an apotheosis." Even between numbers, the sixth Astaire-Rogers musical boasts a helter-skelter goofiness that's a perfect fit for his offhand comic dexterity and her sane sense of humor (when she isn't tripping the light fantastic, her feet are planted firmly on the ground). He's a happy hoofer and a gambler; she's a dance instructor who teams up with him. The complication is that he's already engaged. The director, George Stevens, can't do much with the ungainly contours and klutzy running jokes of Howard Lindsay and Allan Scott's script, but he manages to capture the stars at their warmest and loosest, abetted by deft turns from the affectionately gruff Helen Broderick and the eccentric Victor Moore (who gets laughs with a dissembling whine). And the singing, the dancing, and the Dorothy Fields–Jerome Kern score are paradisial. The tunes include "The Way You Look Tonight," "A Fine Romance," "Bojangles of Harlem," and "Never Gonna Dance"; the choreographic high point, set to the instrumental "Waltz in Swing Time" (arranged and mostly composed by Robert Russell Bennett), is a breathless blend of intricacy and intimacy which seals the partners' love in roughly two and a half minutes. Astaire's longtime associate, Hermes Pan, assisted him and is credited as dance director.—M.S. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 22.)

The Throne of Blood (1957)—Kurosawa's version of "Macbeth" is a virtuoso exercise—a demonstration of the uses of violence, décor, pageantry, and costuming—and it's almost a textbook in the techniques for making a movie move. Besides that, it has the great Isuzu Yamada washing her bloody hands, and, West or East, there may never be a more chilling Lady Macbeth. The ending, with Toshiro Mifune's Macbeth stuck full of arrows, like a porcupine-quill cushion, suggests the wildest Kabuki tradition. The movie's greatness is in Kurosawa's glorious bad taste; he flings mad, absurd images on the screen. He has the courage to go over the top. In Japanese.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 19 and Sept. 21.)

Two for the Road (1967)—Other films by the director, Stanley Donen, are not so edgy. It's the self-consciously witty English scriptwriter, Frederic Raphael, who set his brittle stamp on this story of a husband and wife—Albert Finney and Audrey Hepburn—seen on European trips at different periods of their lives, not consecutively but shifting back and forth. The intention is to show a modern marriage in which ideal people, in love, and successful, are still not happy. Yet there's always a swimming pool for the characters to take their pratfalls in. The facile, comic bits set off audience expectations that are then betrayed, and the clever, bitter stuff just seems sour. Still, at times Hepburn is surpassingly beautiful—particularly at the end, when she's meant to be roughly the age she actually is. Finney seems surly and beefy and rather infantile—which makes Hepburn look all the more gallant and poignant when the wife tries to make the best of things.—P.K. (Symphony Space; Sept. 24.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Sept. 18-19: "The Day the Earth Stood Still" (†) and "The Day the World Ended" (1956, Roger Corman). . . . Sept. 20-24: "The Life of O-Haru" (1952, Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese), with Toshiro Mifune.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Sept. 19 at 2:30: "Home from the Hill" (1960, Vincente Minnelli). . . . ¶ A showing of films from the Janus Films Collection. Sept. 19 and Sept. 23 at 6: "Ugetsu" (1953, Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese). . . . Sept. 19 at 8 and Sept. 21 at 5: "The Throne of Blood" (†). . . . Sept. 20 at 2:30 and Sept. 21 at 1:30: "Red Beard" (1965, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). . . . Sept. 20 at 6 and Sept. 23 at 2:30: "The Magician" (†). . . . Sept. 20 at 8: "Knife in the Water" (1962, Roman Polanski; in Polish). . . . Sept. 22 at 2: "The River" (†). . . . Sept. 22 at 5: "The Spirit of the Beehive" (1973, Victor Erice; in Spanish). . . . Sept. 24 at 2:30: "The Troublemaker" (1964, Theodore Flicker). . . . ¶ A program of works by filmmaker Ken Jacobs, who will be present at all showings. Sept. 20 at 3 and 6:30: "From Muybridge to Brooklyn Bridge" (1996). . . . Sept. 21 at 2:30 and 5: "Opening the Nineteenth Century: 1896" (1989) and "Bitemporal Vision: The Sea" (1994). . . . Sept. 22 at 2:30 and 5: "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" (1995).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—Recent films from Taiwan, all in Taiwanese, with English subtitles. Sept. 18 at 2 and 6:30 and Sept. 19 at 4:15 and 8:30: "The Red Lotus Society" (Stan Lai). . . . Sept. 18 at 4:15 and 8:45 and Sept. 19 at 2: "Lonely Hearts Club" (Yee Chih-yen). . . . Sept. 20 at 6 and Sept. 21 at 4 and 8:30: "Rebels of the Neon God" (Tsai Ming-liang). . . . Sept. 20 at 8:10 and Sept. 21 at 6:10: "Vive l'Amour" (Tsai). . . . Sept. 22 at 4 and Sept. 23 at 2 and 8:30: "A Borrowed Life" (Wu Nien-jen). . . . Sept. 22 at 7:30 and Sept. 23 at 6: "A Confucian Confession" (Edward Yang). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. Sept. 21-22 at 2: "Million Dollar Legs" (1932, Edward Cline).

Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. (307-7171)—Sept. 18 at 8: "Bonnie and Clyde" (†). . . . Sept. 19 at 8: "Blazing Saddles" (†). . . . Sept. 20 at 8: "The Exorcist" (1973, William Friedkin). . . . Sept. 21 at 2: "My Fair Lady" (1964, George Cukor). . . . Sept. 21 at 8: "Blade Runner" (1982, Ridley Scott). . . . Sept. 22 at 2: "Casablanca" (1942, Michael Curtiz). . . . Sept. 22 at 7: "Dirty Harry" (1971, Don Siegel).

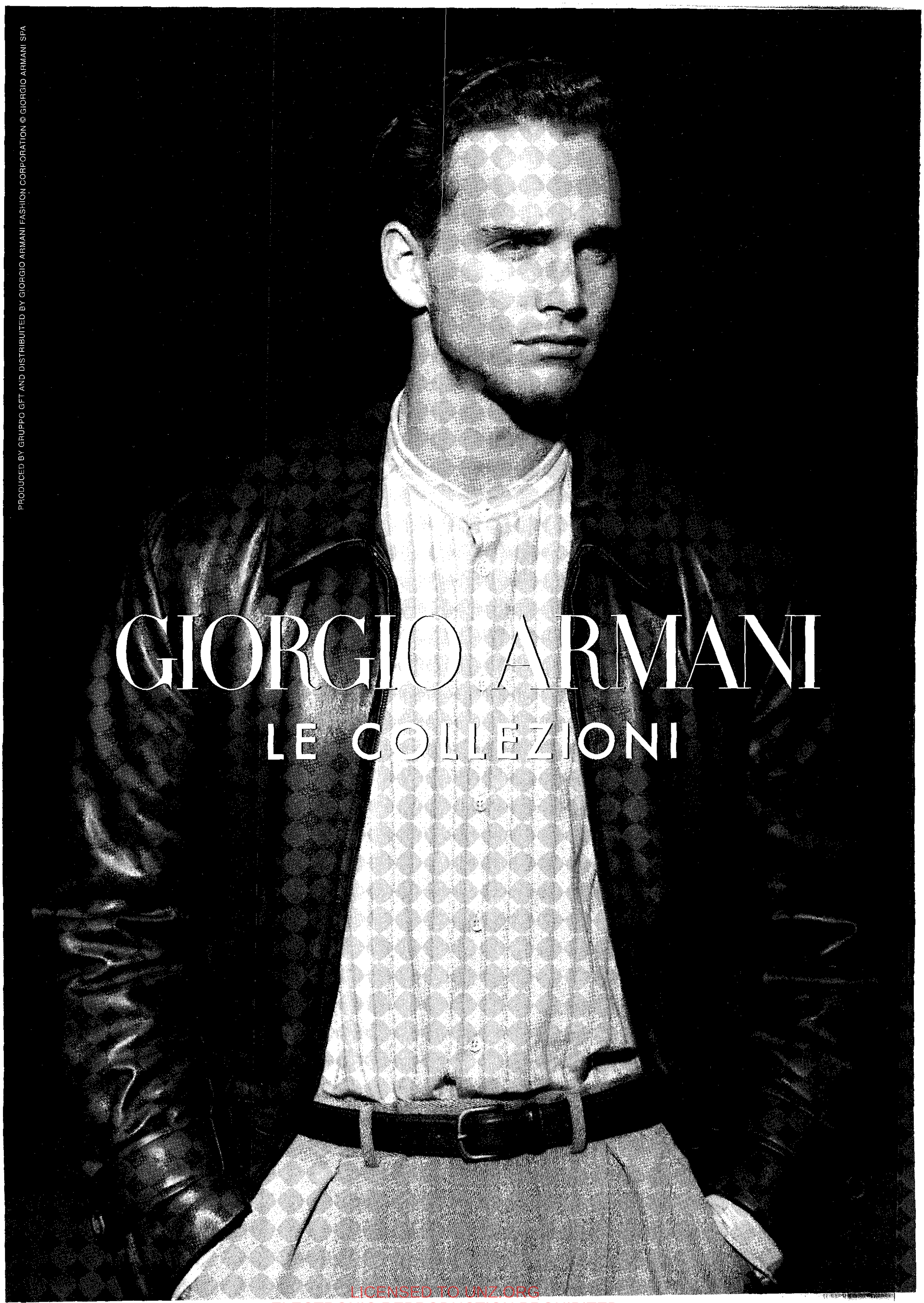
American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—Sept. 21 at 2: "The Student Teachers" (1973, Jonathan Kaplan). . . . Sept. 21 at 4: "Rock 'n' Roll High School" (1979, Allan Arkush). . . . Sept. 22 at 2: "Alice Adams" (†). . . . Sept. 22 at 4: "Swing Time" (†). . . . Sept. 22 at 6: "The More the Merrier" (†).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—Sept. 24 at 7: "Two for the Road" (†). . . . Sept. 24 at 9:15: "Voyage to Italy" (1953, Roberto Rossellini).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Sept. 18-19 at 8: "Jonas in the Desert" (1993, Peter Sempel). . . . Sept. 18-20 at 10: "Dandy" (1988, Sempel). . . . Sept. 20 at 7: "Judex, Episodes 1-6" (1917, Louis Feuillade; silent). . . . Sept. 21 at 2: "Judex, Episodes 7-12.". . . Sept. 21-22 at 8: Two different programs of short films from Hollis Frampton's "Magellan Cycle.". . . Sept. 22 at 1: "Judex, Episodes 1-12."

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—"Karaoke" and "Cold Lazarus," the final works by writer Dennis Potter (1935-1994), are being shown at the museum on a rotating basis. Sept. 19-20 at 6 and Sept. 21-22 at 2: "Cold Lazarus" (1996, Renny Rye), with Albert Finney, Frances de la Tour, Diane Ladd, and Henry Goodman.

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Sept. 22 at 7, the feature will be "The Main Event" (†).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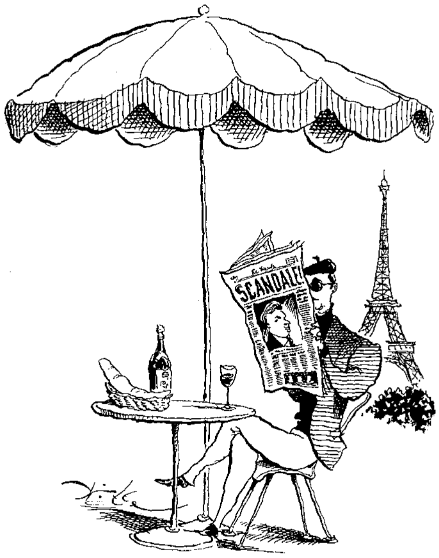
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

BONHOMME RICHARD, OR MORRIS, CHEVALIER

BY now, the fog of TV sound bites and media sleaze which hangs over America like a low static cloud, shutting out the sunlight and blurring all the stars, is so dense that it's easy for Americans to believe that it encircles the world. If Divine Brown and Susan Smith and Sherry Rowlands are pelting down on us, we think, then the whole world must be raining grunge. But the news from abroad still comes in waves, and, over the past few weeks, the waves of news coming from America to Europe were dense but regularly formed: first came the cruise missiles, then came the sex-crazed political consultants, then came more cruise missiles—or the threat of them, anyway—and then, at last, another wave of sex-crazed consultants.

There are some who believe that these displays of American power and immorality are properly imperial, in the Roman manner—one shot of might followed by another shot of vice. The truth is, though, that our immorality does not impress the Europeans—at least, not the French. What the French find striking in a great world power is the apparent absence of even a minimal shrewdness. Right now, the French are in the midst of a nicely turned sex-and-power scandal of their own, centering on Princess Stephanie of Monaco, who wants to divorce her husband because he was photographed in the nude embracing a *strip-teaseuse* named, beautifully, Fili Houteman. Here is a scandal shaped like a scandal: the *strip-teaseuse* strips, the husband pants, the wife splits. What troubles people, though, apparently including Stephanie, about this matter isn't the *strip-teaseuse* but the recklessness. "Didn't you think that it was imprudent to make love at the edge of the swimming pool?" a tabloid reporter asked Fili. ("It was an isolated house," she explained, lamely.) What worries the French about the Dick Morris scandal is the absence of those simple magic words that in Europe even a tabloid reporter can command—nothing so grand as "right" and "wrong" but just "Didn't you think it was imprudent?" What also worries them is how someone so canny can be such a fool. Where was the internal monitor to say, Hey, Dick, now that you're at the center of power in the free world, how about passing up the two-hundred-dollar-an-hour hookers for a while? (And Roger, while you're working for the Republican Presidential nominee, what do you say to keeping those intimate photographs off the Web?)



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL WITTE

It is difficult to explain to Europeans that the people in the American media who make a fuss about scandals are a lot more puritanical than the ordinary people who vote for the politicians. Everyone who voted for Bill Clinton four years ago got it about Gennifer Flowers, and the even greater number of people who are about to vote for him now get it about Dick Morris. But it's hard for outsiders to see that Americans are a lot less censorious than their interpreters, and so the French are left to imagine that there must be more to this scandal than there seems to be. "Why is it," a Frenchman will ask, "that the adviser put the whore on the phone to listen to the President?" "To show her that he actually spoke to him," an American will reply. "But surely this she knew." "Yes, she knew it," the American struggles to explain, and the rest of the sentence is so hard to articulate that the words sink and remain unspoken: Yes, she knew it. But, you see, *he* didn't know it. The President himself, you see, still hardly quite believes that he is actually President. He has to pay the adviser to remind him that he is the President, just as the adviser had to pay the prostitute to remind him that he was really the adviser.

At no time since the Roman Empire has one nation enjoyed the economic, cultural, and political domination of the world that the United States does now. Even the front page of *Libération*, a left-wing Paris newspaper that regards the missile strikes on Iraq as lacking in sense (the French establishment press thinks they're just lacking in subtlety), has an advertisement this week for Schott N.Y.C. jackets. "Where to find it when one is not a U.S. Air Force Pilot," reads the slogan. Even when they're condemning us for dropping the bombs, they're still dressing up like the bombers.

Everyone sleeps with America now. On the whole, the world—or Europe, anyway—is content with this arrangement. They're glad to have us in bed but wish we would stay there, and not keep leaping up to tell them what fabulous sinners we are.

DAWN OF A NEW DAY-GLO

Henry David Thoreau climbed Mt. Katahdin, in Maine, on September 7 and 8, 1846, and found among the boulders and lichenous scree of its treeless dome "something savage and awful," a moonscape "vast and drear and inhuman"—not the embosoming Mother Nature of Walden Pond but "primeval, untamed, and forever untameable *Nature*," which inspired him to cry hauntingly toward the end of "Ktaadn," "*Contact! Contact! Who* are we? *where* are we?" Had Henry gone up the mountain last weekend, exactly a hundred and fifty years later, he might have asked, "Who are *you*? where are *you* from?"

September 6th, 7:30 P.M., Sandy Stream Pond. Man in Teva sandals, drinking a bottle of Katahdin beer, looking through field glasses: "Three moose! And a bear in the parking lot! You can't ever top this!" On being informed that this is the sesquicentennial of Thoreau's ascent: "He came here? Cool." He looks through his binoculars again: "Three moose. I can't believe it. Might as well throw my backpacking gear away after this."

September 7th, 10:50 A.M., Dudley Trail. Guy with blond crewcut, stopping to shed fleece, says that last night he told his friends in Presque Isle that he was leaving to go to church: "This is it, this is church," he says, marvelling at the rocks.

12:15 P.M., the Chimney. Woman, sitting down on the trail, says she is not going any farther. Husband: "Now, honey, O.K., now just calm down." Wife, screaming: "I *have* calmed down—*from a state of utter terror!*"

12:30 P.M., human traffic jam on the Knife Edge, the ridge leading to the Summit. Hikers waiting in line to cross it: guy with large beer gut, proudly exposed; Québécois in shorts and sneakers, looks like he's running a marathon; stoner in Jamaican-vacation T-shirt with spliff on it; woman in Lycra sports bra, sweated through. They trade trail clichés: "Some kind of day we're having!" "Doesn't get much better than this!" "Have a good one!" Contact! Contact!

1:40 P.M., the Summit. There must be three hundred people up here! It feels like a crowd squeezed into a small New York night club awaiting the arrival of the band, except that the stage is on all four sides. A family of twelve, having a reunion. People standing in line to have their pictures taken with the Summit signpost. Forever untamed and untameable Nature decked out in polypro, Gore-Tex, Day-Glo nylon, and Oakley shades. A guy who has just reached the end of a six-month hike along the entire Appalachian Trail, sobbing. A bouquet of flowers someone left on the Summit (possibly for Henry?), already withered in the sun.

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Herbert Peress, who manages Peress of Madison Avenue, his family's ladies'-lingerie store, situated between Sixty-fourth and Sixty-fifth Streets, is not celebrating the Italian conquest of his neighborhood. He is not preparing to buy a two-thousand-dollar suit at the four-story white limestone Giorgio Armani megastore with giant windows which has just opened at the northwest corner of Madison and Sixty-fifth. He may even take a pass on a nine-hundred-dollar sport jacket at the new Valentino boutique, which is about to open a few doors up, just beyond Mario Caldi and south of Via Spiga, Krizia, La Perla, I Santi, and so on. "I have a very jaundiced attitude about it," says Peress, a gentleman of sixty with thinning silver hair.

Peress counts himself a lucky man. On a stretch of Madison Avenue that has become so desirable that scarcely anybody except Italian boutiques can afford the rent, he still has a few years left on a long-term lease. The last grocery store moved out years ago; the hardware store left last year. Peress, whose parents moved the store from Fordham Road to Washington Heights in 1934, and then to Madison Avenue in 1955, already feels like something of an anachronism. He does not wear black, and his idea of attitude is raising his eyebrows. Ladies walk into his store and say, "I need a skin-colored bra that has the least of anything in it—no lace, no nothing." This being Madison Avenue, the bra costs sixty dollars.

Peress is not particularly concerned that the no-frills-undergarment trade will decamp for Armani. Business-wise, he says, "I think it's going to be a plus." But he is feeling abandoned: gone are the savings bank, the stationery store, and the ineffable Rita's Blue Tent, which sold what he describes as "very gaudy ladies' dresses" until Armani cleared out the whole corner. He's already forgotten what else was there; it's history. "The intimacy of small stores is lost," he says gloomily. It wasn't long ago that people thought of the Upper East Side as chic rather than trendy; people who lived there saw themselves as staid. Now they will have to get used to living in the middle of a fashion shoot.

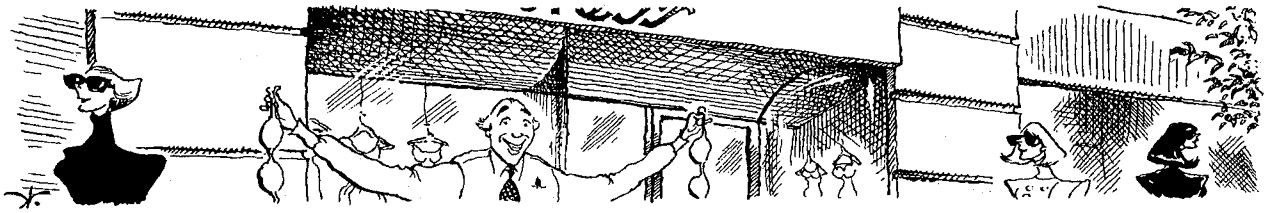
Still, Peress is a businessman, not a moralist. "This is America," he says. "It's a very free market. You have to roll with the punches and keep up with the Joneses."

FRETTING

In an Austin television studio, B. B. King sat in a corner and calmly ate his dinner while stagehands scurried around him. He was about to tape his segment of an all-star tribute to Stevie Ray Vaughan, and in other parts of the room Eric Clapton, Bonnie Raitt, Robert Cray, Jimmie Vaughan, Art Neville, and Dr. John prepared to perform. King, whose autobiography, "Blues All Around Me," is due in stores in early October, turned to fellow-bluesman Buddy Guy, who was sitting on his right. "Buddy," he said, his voice growing serious. "What do you think of the guys when they be breaking up their guitars and then burning them up?"

"They do that 'cause the company give them whatever they want," Guy said. He took a sip of iced tea before continuing. "They don't pay for them, and they don't respect 'em."

"I always feel bad when I see that." King shook his head and grimaced. "Oh, man. It hurts me to see a guitar banged up like that. It pains me. Makes me think how hard it was to get one."



Herbert Peress surveys the traffic on Madison Avenue.

The kernels pop
and the cans
crush
and the numbers
crunch
and the
flowers
explode

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"Yes! I had days where I didn't eat, when my stomach was growling and the only thing of value I had was my guitar." Guy's eyes grew misty for a split second. "But I wouldn't hawk it. I went literally hungry, but I just wouldn't give up my guitar. I have hawked my coat in the middle of a Chicago winter and froze half to death because I wouldn't part with my axe. I mean, I have dropped mine accidentally and cried."

"That's right," King said. "Anytime you have something that's taken care of you, that you can depend on every night, you treat it with love and respect. You don't destroy it. You don't take out your anger on it."

"No, you don't," Guy agreed. "You treat it with love. My guitar is the only thing I can tell my wife is gonna sleep between her and me and she won't get mad. I tell her, 'I found you with this and I want it by my side. Don't move it.' And she won't."

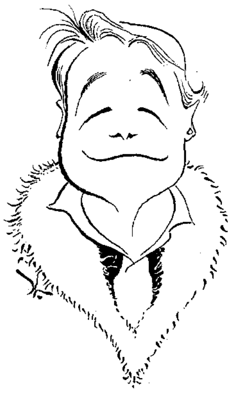
"Mmm-hmm." King nodded his head vigorously. "That's right."

ANONYMOUS

Truth to tell,
Seldom told
Under oath,
We live lies
And grow old
Self disguised—
Who are you
I talk to?

—Samuel Menashe

THE BELLE OF BETHEL



Rose Williams

Rose Williams, the diminutive sister and muse of Tennessee Williams, died on September 4th at the age of eighty-seven; her passing closes the final chapter of her younger brother's great theatrical legacy to our century. "My sister had been magically suited to the wild country of childhood but it remained to be seen how she would adapt herself to the uniform and yet more complex world that grown girls enter," Williams wrote of Miss Rose, as he called her, who was his boon companion and a bulwark against his "haunted household." He went on, "My mother and maternal grandmother came of a calmer blood than my sister and I. They were unable to suspect the hazards that we were faced with, having in us the turbulent blood of our father. Irreconcilables fought for supremacy in us; peace could never be made: at best a smoldering sort of armistice might be reached after many battles." In playwriting, Williams turned inner violence into outer oblivion; with Rose, the process was reversed. Her outer violence was turned to inner oblivion in 1943, when she was lobotomized. "Why should you be there, little Rose," Williams wrote in his diary, "and *me here*?—no reason—anywhere—Why?—why?"

Williams built an altar to Rose in his Key West home, but his enduring monument to her fragile intelligence and to his survivor's guilt was his work. Rose became the emblem of the brave, shadowy souls too delicate and too fearful to survive in "the beanstalk country" of daily tribulation. She was famously the model for the shy, crippled Laura in "The Glass Menagerie." But her spirit finds its way, too, into the lonely, panic-stricken, sexually tormented Blanche Du Bois in "A Streetcar Named Desire," Hannah Jelkes in "The Night of the Iguana," and Alma Winemiller in "Summer and Smoke" (which is currently being revived on Broadway, at the Roundabout Theatre). And it is to Rose that Williams speaks in many of his most beautiful poems. In "Lament for the Moths," he writes, "Who will be cooler than curtains against the day, / Who will come early and softly to ease my lot /As I move through the shadowy rooms with a troubled heart?"

Rose lived out her days at a cost of about three hundred thousand dollars a year in the only two-room suite at the Bethel Methodist Home, in Ossining, New York—a beautiful red-brick building with white pillars which sits on a hill and has an American flag in the center of its circular driveway. New floral arrangements arrived for her every week, and she had nurses attending her around the clock, all provided by the income from the trust that her brother had established for her. (Upon Rose's death, the trust is dissolved: Williams's papers went to Harvard, and the royalties and copyrights are controlled by the University of the South.) Over the years, Williams's loyal coterie—the producer Charles Bowden and his actress wife, Paula Laurence, the actress Jane Lawrence Smith, and Rose's trustee the late Lady St. Just—saw to it that her rooms were well furnished and that she had frequent visitors. Rose's bedroom had a white canopy bed and white wicker furniture, and on the television set in her blue sitting room was a framed photograph of her favorite actor, Tristan Rogers, who plays Robert Scorpio on "General Hospital," her favorite program. Except for a poster of her brother, Rose's walls were decorated with English prints and two fictitious family portraits of the English aristocracy. They constituted part of the imaginary patrician family that Rose had made up for herself. In it, both her brother and Chuck Bowden were her "sons"; her special companion, Elizabeth Gormley, was her "daughter"; her daytime nurse, Iona Sterling, was the nurse of her Mississippi childhood, the beloved Ozzie; even her driver, Bill Griffin, was part of the family group.

Rose had her pleasures. She loved clothes. She loved Christmas. She loved churchgoing and the singing of hymns very loudly and very slowly. Once, when her brother was still alive, the Bowdens and Maureen Stapleton gave Rose Christmas in the middle of summer. "She and Tennessee sang carols and danced," Paula Laurence recalls. Rose also liked to be driven to the nearby Highland Diner, where she'd order a grilled-cheese sandwich and "a non-alcoholic Coke." She insisted on signing the check, which Bowden would then pay. "She moved among her subjects" is how Bowden describes Rose's air of noblesse oblige. "I do not desire it" was Rose's ornate way of saying no, a word to which she could give an imperious flourish. She liked to go for drives, and over the years she acquired the habit of gesturing from the limousine, a semaphore that Williams dubbed the "Windsor wave." He offered to take her to England to meet the Queen. "I *am* the Queen," she said.

Two years ago, on Rose's birthday, in November, Bowden brought her a cake and candles. "O.K., Rose, now blow out your candles and make a wish," he said when the time came. Rose mumbled something that Bowden couldn't hear, and then blew them out. Bowden asked what she'd wished for. "Life," Rose said. ♦

"Bonhomme Richard, or Morris, Chevalier," Adam Gopnik; "Dawn of a New Day-Glo," John Seabrook; "There Goes the Neighborhood," James Traub; "Fretting," Alan Paul; "The Belle of Bethel," John Lahr.

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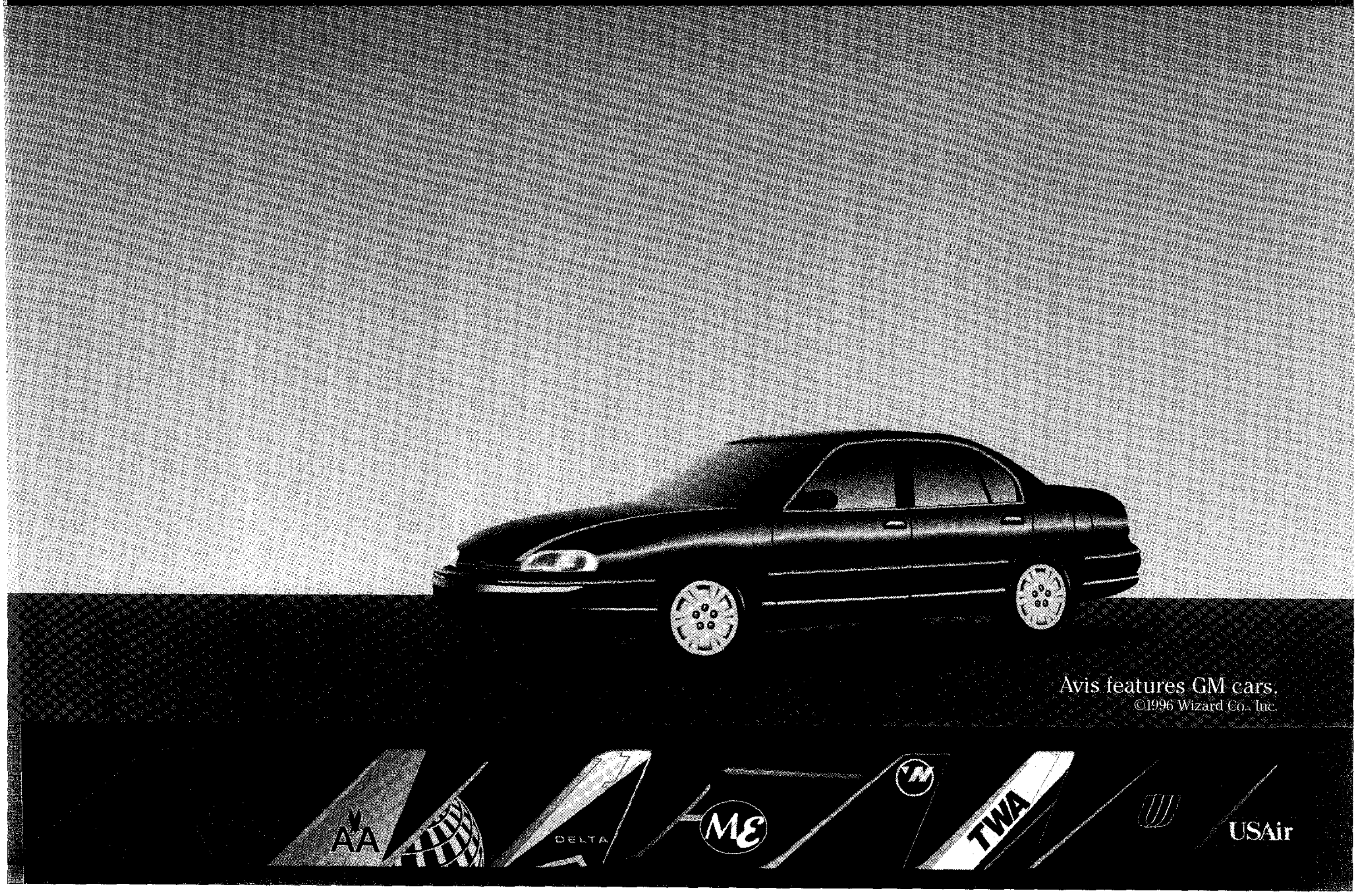

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THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

THE LAST DAYS OF ARMAND HAMMER

His entire life had been a deception, but the people closest to him didn't realize that they were also part of the game.

BY EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN

ARMAND HAMMER made his last public appearance on November 25, 1990, at the opening-night ceremony for the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, which had just been built behind the Occidental Petroleum headquarters, on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. Hammer had taken over Occidental in 1956, when it was nearly bankrupt, and had transformed it into the fourteenth-largest industrial company in the United States. Though he owned less than one per cent of Occidental's stock, he was the chairman, and he ran the company with absolute authority. Up until 1972, Hammer had forced members of the board to sign undated letters of resignation that could be put into effect whenever he chose, and he continued to select board members on the basis of their allegiance to him. Occidental was a corporate extension of Armand Hammer. He used the company treasury for his philanthropic activities and to buy works of art for the Armand Hammer Collection. Occidental subsidized the yearly Armand Hammer Conference on Peace and Human Rights. It financed Armand Hammer Productions, which produced films and books about Hammer's global activities, particularly his role as a self-appointed ambassador to establish peaceful relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. The company paid for Hammer's annual celebrity-studded birthday party, his personal lawyers, his bodyguards, and his Boeing 727. Nearly a hundred million dollars of Occidental's funds had gone into the Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center.

Hammer was ninety-two years old, and suffered from chronic anemia, bronchitis, prostate enlargement, kidney ailments, an irregular heartbeat, and—unbeknown to almost everyone around him—advanced bone-marrow cancer. Nick Butcher, his night nurse, had twice used artificial respiration to revive him in the fall of 1990. Nevertheless, Hammer was determined to attend the opening of the museum. He was given a blood transfusion, which made him feel more alert. He also took a large dose of painkillers. He had his hair trimmed and was dressed in a new tuxedo that had been designed to conceal his weight loss. Attendants strapped him into a wheelchair and he was carried, barely conscious, down the steps of his house to a waiting limousine.

Woozy from drugs, Hammer cut the ceremonial ribbon and took his seat at the table of honor. On his right was Danielle Mitterrand, the wife of the President of France. He had pledged three hundred thousand dollars to the Mitterrands' private foundation. Across from him was Tom Bradley, the mayor of Los Angeles, whose reëlection campaign he had generously contributed to. On his left was the director of the museum, Hilary Gibson, a tall and handsome woman in her late forties. Grasping her hand under the table, he said, "We did it." At around 10 P.M., two medical attendants picked Hammer up and carried him out of the room.

HILARY GIBSON, who supervised the creation of the Armand Hammer Museum and Cultural Center, had been Hammer's mistress for sixteen years. When she met him in the mid-seventies, she was a former airline stewardess named Martha Wade Kaufman who was married to a professor at U.S.C. She had interviewed Hammer for an in-flight airline magazine, and shortly thereafter went to work for him in the P.R. department at Occidental. Hammer travelled constantly, and Kaufman usually accompanied him. She became his personal art consultant, working from her house in Beverly Hills, which was where their liaisons took place when they were in California. Hammer's wife, Frances, who had long been suspicious of the relationship, became particularly agitated about Kaufman's role around the time that plans for the new museum were taking shape. Not willing to give up his mistress, Hammer came up with a ploy that he thought was ingenious. He had Kaufman assume a new identity. She became Hilary Gibson, and it was explained that she had taken Kaufman's job. She wore wigs and eyeglasses and changed the way she dressed. Since she had worked out of her home for years, many of the employees at Occidental and at the Armand Hammer Foundation didn't know what she looked like anyway, and most of the others kept their counsel. Hammer took immense pleasure in the success of his deception.

Armand Hammer's art consultant and mistress was known as Martha Kaufman in 1977 (center) and as Hilary Gibson in 1990 (right). Hammer's wife, Frances (left), suspected that they were having an affair, so Hammer had Kaufman change her identity.

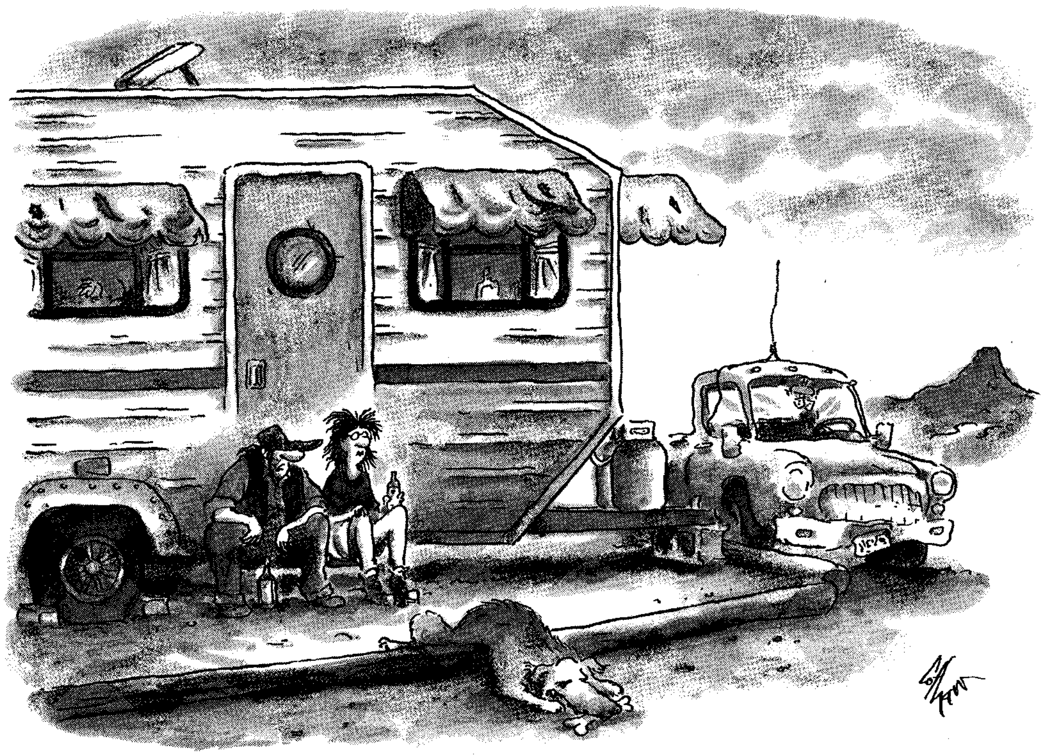
LEFT PHOTO: AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Hammer was a master of risky and improbable deceptions. He had spent a lifetime constructing stories that explained away inconvenient facts about his activities. One of the most efficient tools for this was autobiography. He would sculpt events to his liking, cutting away things that detracted from his image and adding apocryphal material that enhanced it. In the thirties, he had written an account of his early years in the Soviet Union that camouflaged his secret activity on behalf of the Soviets, and twenty years later he decided to clear the air with the F.B.I. by offering J. Edgar Hoover a lengthy autobiographical memorandum that supplied an innocent explanation for charges that had been made linking him to Russian espionage agents. Hoover subsequently closed the security case against him, and the autobiographical sketch became the basis of an F.B.I. summary report that would be furnished to five future Presidents. In 1973, Hammer paid for an updated biography, "The Remarkable Life of Dr. Armand Hammer," in which a new role was invented for him: that of behind-the-scenes agent of U.S. Presidents. He had Occidental's public-relations department dispatch copies of the book to journalists who wanted to write about him, and they used it as background material. His assertions thus passed into clip files and archives, and, through repetition, attained the status of quasi fact. An autobiography written in the nineteen-eighties provided a similar service.

When Communism was unravelling in 1990, Hammer decided that he needed to add a new volume to his autobiography in which he could establish a role for himself in ending the Cold War. He also believed that the discovery of a cure for cancer was imminent, and he wanted to credit himself, as chairman of the President's cancer panel and a chief fund-raiser, with mobilizing the scientific and medical resources leading to it. But by late 1990 Hammer was disoriented and dispirited. Though he had reached the book's last chapter, he no longer wanted to work on it. Unlike his previous autobiographical works, this book could not be controlled completely.

HAMMER had known that he was dying for about six weeks. He had developed stomach and chest pains during a weeklong bird shoot at Albemarle Farms, the Virginia estate of the industrialist John Kluge, and on October 10th had been flown home and taken to the U.C.L.A. Medical Center—an institution to which he donated generously. Tests showed that his worst fears had come to pass: a cancer that he had believed was in remission was spreading out of control. Hammer had very little time to put his affairs in order and protect his reputation after his death. The instrument he used to control his secrets was the Armand Hammer Living Trust. Under California law, a living trust, unlike an estate, is not open to probate. No one except the trustee could learn how much money Hammer had accumulated in his life or under what terms it would be disbursed.

After leaving the U.C.L.A. Medical Center, on October 12th, Hammer stopped briefly at his sixteenth-floor office at Occidental. He removed a sheaf of papers from the safe in his desk, to which he alone had the key. He then had the chauffeur take him to his home in the Holmby Hills section of Westwood. Rosamaria Durazo, the doctor who had been with him almost every day since Frances died the previous year, was waiting for him. Hammer had met Durazo some six years earlier, when she was in her mid-thirties. A graduate of a medical school in Mexico, she came to Hammer's office seeking help with an immigration problem: she had been offered an appointment as an assistant professor of anesthesiology at the Jules Stein Eye Institute, at U.C.L.A., but the Immigration and Naturalization Service had not yet given her the requisite green card. Hammer told his executive assistant to place a call to the White House. He then told Durazo that the problem would be taken care of, and, as she learned a few days later, it was. She was made act-



"Let's tow the trailer to a new state and make a fresh start."

ing chief of anesthesiology at the institute. In 1985, Hammer and Durazo began taking trips together. They went to China, Japan, and Russia. He enjoyed introducing her to heads of state as his "personal physician." By 1989, one Occidental employee remembers, she was "travelling everywhere with Dr. Hammer."

Hammer had maintained the appearance of an intact marriage by continuing to live with Frances, but their relationship had become increasingly strained. Late in 1989, Frances called her niece and heir, Joan Weiss, and told her that she was considering leaving Hammer. She also told Weiss that she had stored her financial papers in a closet that was concealed behind a bookcase in the guest room. Adding to the tensions that fall, Hammer had been pressing Frances to sign a document waiving her legal claims to the art collection that he had consigned to his museum. Finally, on November 15th, she scribbled her signature on the document. Ten days later, Frances slipped and cracked her hip and was rushed to U.C.L.A. for emergency surgery. Although the hip was successfully repaired, postoperative complications developed. When Joan Weiss arrived at the hospital the day after the operation, her aunt was woozy from sedatives. Rosamaria Durazo was also there, and Frances seemed discombobulated by this. Frances whispered to Weiss, "What is she doing here?"

Frances's condition deteriorated, and she was soon in a coma. Hammer nevertheless left for Moscow with Durazo on his private plane, Oxy One. He met Gorbachev in the Kremlin on December 7th—his fortieth meeting in the Kremlin since he visited Lenin there in 1921—and was presented with a vase in appreciation of his services. They went directly from Russia to Morocco, where they vacationed for three days at a villa in Marrakech. Just after they returned to California, Frances died of pneumonia. Hammer refused to permit a post-mortem examination—which is ordinarily performed in deaths that follow surgery—and arranged a quiet funeral. Durazo began living in the Hammer home several days later.

AFTER the first signs of cancer of the bone marrow were detected and conventional hormonal therapy proved ineffective, Durazo had encouraged Hammer to use some herbal preparations from Mexico that he took in a *té negro*, or black tea, three times a day. He confidently explained to his doctors that it contained an "antiplasterion" that would prevent the cancer cells from spreading (and in their medical reports the doctors duly noted the mysterious black tea, which they were not allowed to analyze). Security guards from Occidental flew the illicit tea into California on company planes in gallon containers.

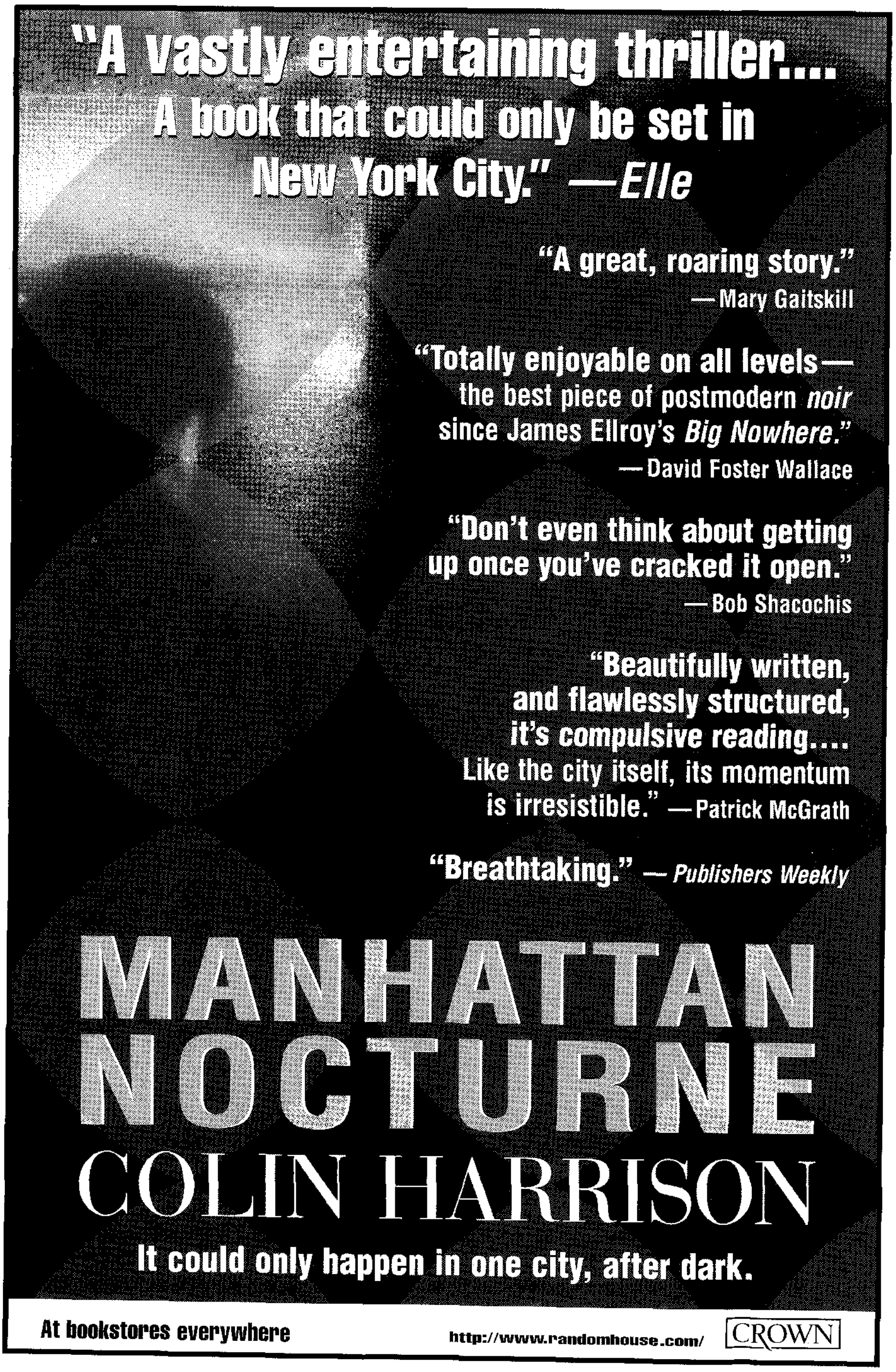
Hammer told his doctors that the *té negro* had given him a new lease on life. In the first nine months of 1990, he logged more than a quarter of a million miles on Oxy One. He and Durazo returned to Moscow, where he was treated with the pomp usually reserved for heads of state, and then proceeded to Beijing and Tokyo. In Paris and London, they went to art auctions. In Mexico City, they dined with the President of Mexico; in Washington with the President of the United States. In Louisville, they attended the Kentucky Derby and in Baltimore the Preakness Stakes. In a spa in Romania, they explored a "fountain of youth" therapy. In Maui, they spent a weekend on the beach with Hammer's grandchildren. In Los Angeles in May, he threw a gala party for his ninety-second birthday, with a troupe of cancan dancers in Gay Nineties costumes. In Tel Aviv, they celebrated Durazo's birthday, and shortly afterward he proposed marriage.

Hammer had amended his living trust to provide Durazo with approximately a million dollars. He had created similar funds for other women who had shared his life. As long as these women followed the rules laid down by the trust, they would receive monthly checks. He had hoped that this arrangement would keep his relationships with the women secret. After Frances's death, however, Joan Weiss and her husband, Robert, the executor of Frances's estate, went to the concealed closet that Frances had told Joan about and removed the financial records she had stored there. The transactions these records describe date back to before Frances's marriage to Hammer, in 1956, and show the extent to which Hammer had relied on her inherited wealth in paying off his debts and buying control of Occidental Petroleum. After examining the records, the Weisses were convinced that Hammer had systematically turned Frances's money into his own. In July, 1990, Robert Weiss filed suit against Hammer on behalf of the estate, charging that he had defrauded Frances of some four hundred million dollars in community property, including her rightful share of the art collection.

Hammer was at first confident that he could beat the case. After all, as he told his lawyer, he had been sued over the past half century by dozens of claimants—partners, bankers, art dealers, cattle breeders, relatives, former employees, liquor authorities, the Internal Revenue Service, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and his own shareholders—and he had always prevailed. With Occidental's resources at his disposal, he could exhaust an opponent. So he assumed that in time he would defeat or settle with Frances's niece and heir. But then in October, when he learned that he was about to die, he realized that if the litigation continued after his death it could dredge secrets out of the living trust. The disclosure that he had provided funds for women whose relationships with him he had concealed from his wife could itself help persuade a jury that he had, as was alleged, deceived her when he persuaded her to sign away her rights to their community property.

On the evening of October 12th, Hammer called his lawyer, Stafford Matthews, at home. He ordered him to begin drafting a new will and to reduce the assets in the trust so that it would be a more or less empty vessel. Hammer would find other ways to provide for his women friends and remaining family.

THE next day, Hammer had Nick Butcher drive him to the Armand Hammer Museum, where Hilary Gibson was waiting for him, as she did almost every Saturday. When Gibson, then Martha Wade Kaufman, began her relationship with Hammer, in the mid-seventies, he had explained to her that art was for him neither a business nor a passion; it was a means to achieve glory. To give his collection prominence during his lifetime, he would exhibit it in the great museums of the world. After his death, it would be a monument to him. If she agreed to help him, as she did, she would "never have to worry about money again." This early conversation took place in a hotel suite,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and after he had made his offer of a job Hammer led her to the adjoining bedroom. When he left the suite, Kaufman saw that he had put five one-hundred-dollar bills on the table for her. Insulted, she did not take them. But his message was clear.

Kaufman/Gibson worked for Hammer from her house in Beverly Hills—a house that he had encouraged her to buy because it had a back entrance that abutted on an alley where he could park his limousine. He had her decorate the house like an English cottage, with furniture that had belonged to his late brother Harry. In the master bedroom was a bed that could be raised and lowered to different positions.

Hammer would usually arrive at Kaufman's house about noon. He would take off his tie and jacket and make himself comfortable at the table in the kitchen. He liked her to be present while he phoned the White House, the Kremlin, Buckingham Palace. Aside from her salary, she had been promised a lifetime income after Hammer's death. It was to be paid out of a secret Swiss bank account that he said would be worth ten million dollars. Since he was not in the best of health, and an octogenarian, this account was an important part of their deal.

It was not an easy bargain for her. She had to be available on short notice. He gave her two beepers to alert her to his calls. He didn't want her to see other men, and to monitor her movements he had a homing device installed in her car and a tap placed on her phone. He also frequently asked her to wear a disguise when they appeared in public, and she submitted to sexual demands that she later described as "extremely humiliating." Despite his advanced age, Hammer was energetic, which he attributed to swimming daily laps in his pool at home. Hammer wanted her to have his child, and when she couldn't he insisted that she "undergo surgical procedures to facilitate impregnation," as she later described it. The procedures were "conducted under his direct view and direction."

TOM BACHTELL

THE HAMMER TAPES

How the Occidental Petroleum chief got what he wanted.

"You talked to the Minister, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"He's getting paid, isn't he?"

"You betcha."

"Well, then why in the hell won't he deliver? This isn't such a big thing."

"It is to them. . . ."

"Well, you know what I would do? I hate discussing this, but maybe you're not paying this Minister enough. . . . How much are we paying?"

"The total amount of money?"

"Yeah."

"We've paid $3 million."

THIS dialogue, though it sounds straight out of a Grade-B film, comes from a tape that Armand Hammer recorded secretly in 1971. Like Nixon, he made many surreptitious recordings of sensitive conversations. He taped everyone from lowly employees to President John F. Kennedy. Some sixty hours of these tapes came into my possession this year, as I was finishing work on a book on Hammer.

The exchange above concerns bribes apparently made to Venezuelan officials during negotiations with Hammer's company, Occidental Petroleum, about setting up an oil concession, or what was called in Venezuela a service contract, which would allow Occidental to drill for oil and share the profits with the government. The "Minister" is an official in the administration of Rafael Caldera, who was President in 1971. Caldera was voted out of office two years later but was reëlected in 1994 and is once again President of Venezuela.

The man Hammer is grilling on the tape is John D. Askew. He is Hammer's "conduit and agent," as he described himself later. The three million dollars was meant to secure the oil rights on three of five tracts in a field south of Lake Maracaibo—a field that contained an estimated three billion barrels of oil. The service contract had already been granted, but Occidental had run into a snag in finalizing the deal. The well-laundered cash that Askew claimed to have disbursed was purportedly paid out to get around regulations for incorporating the company in Venezuela. Hammer transferred the three million dollars to Askew by means of a convoluted route that went from a Liberian subsidiary to a Canadian bank to a shell corporation in the Bahamas and then to other shell corporations in Panama.

Shortly after the tape was made, Occidental began to drill for oil. Problems arose a few years later, however, when a new government nationalized foreign oil holdings. Compensation was to be paid to the companies that held the now defunct contracts, but the government refused to pay Occidental, since rumors about bribes had surfaced. In the ensuing scandal, Askew was arrested, but then released when no evidence of payoffs could be found.

Hammer and other Occidental officials denied that bribes had been authorized. Hammer took the offensive by asking the United States government to intervene, claiming that his company had been victimized by Venezuela. The State Department argued that unless Venezuela could produce evidence of bribery it should pay compensation. Finally, in 1989, after Venezuelan courts ruled that no such evidence existed, Occidental was paid an estimated forty million dollars in compensation.

Of course, neither the officials at the State Department championing Hammer's cause nor the authorities in Venezuela knew of the existence of the Hammer tapes. They remained Hammer's secret until after his death. Hammer's role

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KAUFMAN'S job as Hammer's art consultant included arranging exhibitions of the Armand Hammer Collection, which by the late nineteen-seventies consisted of more than a hundred and sixty works. The exhibitions would open with gala receptions to which officials, socialites, and journalists were invited. Hammer justified the expense on the ground that his art served as a "good-will ambassador" for Occidental. In some countries, such as Venezuela, the art-related events also diverted public attention from the machinations through which Hammer was secretly winning oil concessions.

Kaufman saw another side of Hammer's art collecting, however, when he became fascinated by the work of the nineteenth-century caricaturist Honoré Daumier. In this case, Hammer actually became interested in the artist's work. Daumier had a cynical view of the political order. With his sharp pen, he mercilessly savaged the French establishment, depicting its lead-in the bribery scheme is made clear by the tapes. He not only discusses the three million dollars in payoffs—including "who gets what"—but he authorizes additional payoffs and micromanages them. He even tells his bagman whom he should pay to reach the President.

I played the tape for a former high-level official in the State Department who had been involved in the effort to press Venezuela to compensate Hammer's company for its losses. He listened intently and took notes. He expressed particular concern about the unambiguous references to Pedro Tinoco, who had been Minister of Finance in 1971 and later president of the Central Bank of Venezuela. I replayed a section in which Askew begins, "One million is divided to Pedro and his bunch." And Hammer repeats, "That's Tinoco. He gets a million."

"My guess is that when this [tape] becomes public, they will try to hang the whole thing on Tinoco," the former State Department official said. Tinoco, who died in 1993, was closely allied with United States banking interests.

"Would the State Department have intervened on Hammer's behalf if this tape had been available?" I asked.

"I certainly wouldn't have been part of it," he answered. American pressure on the Venezuelans to accommodate Hammer had been intense.

I next played the tape for Enrique Tejera Paris, the Venezuelan Ambassador to the United Nations, who had been closely associated with President Caldera. As a former Venezuelan foreign minister, he had waged a campaign against corrupt business dealings. After listening to the tape for ten minutes, he picked up the phone and placed a call to President Caldera. Then, in my presence, Caldera called him back. Tejera told him excitedly in Spanish about the contents of the tape. Caldera asked for a transcript, and I agreed to supply it.

After the President hung up, Ambassador Tejera placed a call to Maurice Valery, who had headed the Venezuelan National Petroleum Company in 1971. When he got him on his cellular phone, I described a portion of the tape in which Hammer asserts that Askew "gave Valery a half million."

Valery was understandably shocked by what he described as "voices from the grave." He told me that "the only thing Hammer ever gave me was a catalogue" of his art collection. As for Askew, Valery recalled meeting him once at a large social function. He described the putative half-million-dollar payoff as "pure invention."

Then I called another key figure on the tape, Hugo Perez La Salvia. In 1971, as Caldera's Minister of Mines and Hydrocarbons, he, along with Valery, had been in a position to influence negotiations about service contracts. On the tape, Hammer specifically asks Askew, "How are you taking care of La Salvia?" Askew says he doesn't know if La Salvia has received any money, but he describes a convoluted route of intermediaries that was used to try to get to him. Hammer proposes offering La Salvia "another quarter of a million dollars." La Salvia was courteous but categorically denied that he had received money from Hammer or any of his associates. "I don't care what Hammer says on the tape," he said. "I met him once in my life at some ceremony a quarter of a century ago. I remember nothing about him other than that he called himself 'Doctor.' "

Somehow Hammer's problems over the oil concessions were resolved, and he marshalled his powerful friends in Washington to defend him against charges that this had been effected with payoffs to government officials. The paper trail of the three million dollars ends at a bank in Panama. Where the money went after that is an open question, but we know from the tapes that Hammer clearly intended to use it for bribes. —EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN

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ing figures—magistrates, bureaucrats, cardinals, bankers, and businessmen—as brutish, greedy, arrogant, and grasping men with bloated stomachs and evil faces. Hammer appreciated, as he put it, Daumier's "courage to stand up to authority."

In 1975, the George Longstreet Collection, which contained more than six thousand Daumier lithographs, became available. Longstreet had tentatively agreed to sell his collection to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for the relatively low price of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, which is how Hammer, a trustee of the museum, learned that it was for sale. He offered the museum an attractive deal: if it would allow him to buy the Daumier collection for the same amount the museum would have paid, he would deliver it to the museum as a donation within six months of the purchase date. This arrangement would allow him to take a large tax deduction, and the museum would get the collection at no cost. Hammer insisted that the deal not be put in writing, so as to maximize his tax advantage (which would otherwise be limited to the actual purchase price, rather than the assessed fair-market price of the collection, which could be many times that amount). The board of trustees agreed to what seemed like a mutually beneficial arrangement, and Hammer bought the Daumiers.

Six months passed, and Hammer did not donate them to the museum. Despite letter after letter from the museum's director, Hammer could not "bear to part with the Daumiers," he confessed to Kaufman. He wrote to the museum, denying that he had made an agreement with it, but he promised to bequeath the drawings to the museum at his death. This pledge had no legal force, and, as it turned out, he changed his will, so the museum never got the Daumiers.

Hammer made another important purchase for his collection in 1980, when a Leonardo da Vinci notebook, the Codex Leicester, came up for sale at Christie's in London. It was the only Leonardo manuscript in private hands. Hammer bought it for five million two hundred and eighty thousand dollars (plus a ten-per-cent commission to Christie's), a record for a manuscript. Then, on December 3, 1980, Hammer called a special meeting of the four directors on Occidental's Executive Committee and asked that the company make a secret "appropriation" to the Armand Hammer Foundation of up to six million dollars to cover the cost of acquiring the Leonardo. The members of the committee had no choice but to approve it if they wanted to remain in Hammer's good graces. The minutes of the Executive Committee noted that "such a contribution is deemed a worthwhile and appropriate expenditure of corporate funds."

Hammer renamed the Codex Leicester the Codex Hammer, and arranged to have the small Italian town of Vinci, where Leonardo was born, confer honorary citizenship on him. He became, ceremonially, Armand Hammer da Vinci. He also had the Armand Hammer Foundation give U.C.L.A. money to establish the Armand Hammer Center for Leonardo Studies and Research.

After Hammer took possession of the codex, he had it dismantled and cut into seventy-two separate pages. He then had each page mounted in a freestanding display case so that it could be exhibited. He announced that he had retained a squad of élite commandos, trained in Asian martial arts and armed with Uzi machine guns, to guard the codex day and night. Though no actual commandos were guarding it—and it had once been left unattended in two crates on Hammer's plane at an airport—the purported security arrangements caught the interest of the media. With great fanfare, the Codex Hammer travelled to fifteen museums in nine countries and attracted more than a million viewers.

Hammer planned to leave his art collection to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. But the trustees of the museum balked at his demand that they create what would have been virtually another museum within their museum, with a curator who answered to the Armand Hammer Foundation, and with life-size portraits of Hammer and his wife hung prominently among the Goyas and the Rembrandts. So Hammer decided to build his own museum. His name was carved in marble letters three feet high on two sides of the building, like some ancient stela. There was a seven-foot-high portrait of Hammer in the entrance.

By the fall of 1990, with Rosamaria Durazo living in Hammer's house, his visits to Gibson had become less frequent, and she concentrated on making sure that the opening of the museum was a success. On Saturday, October 13th, after going over the invitation list with her, Hammer said, without showing any sign of emotion, that he might not be able to attend. He then explained the "legal problem," as he called it. His lawyers had warned him that the arrangement for providing for her after his death could be revealed by the lawsuit filed by his wife's estate. It was a dangerous situation. Hammer told her that she "could go to prison" if she accepted money directly from the secret account in Switzerland. Under a new arrangement he was making, she would get an ironclad contract from the tax-exempt Armand Hammer Foundation, which would pay her two hundred thousand dollars a year for the rest of her life. He suggested that she draft her own contract with the foundation, outlining the terms of its financial obligation to her. She did so, and a month later Hammer and the other officers of the foundation signed it.

The following Sunday, as he did most Sundays, Hammer visited his grandson, Michael, who was now thirty-five; Michael is the only son of Hammer's only son, Julian, whose mother was Hammer's first wife. Hammer had chosen Michael to succeed him as head of the family and to assume a high level of responsibility at Occidental. He now told him that he did not have long to live. Michael would have to take responsibility for his sister, Casey, and for his father, Julian. Though the funds in the living trust had to be cut to a bare minimum, provisions would be made for family members.

Hammer met two days later with Casey Hammer, who had just turned thirty. When she was ushered into her grandfather's bedroom by Rosamaria Durazo, Casey found him sitting up in bed in his red flannel pajamas. He explained that she would receive one and a half million dollars from him, free of taxes, as well as the deed to her house. He stressed that this would be "separate from the will, so therefore nothing would get tied up."

Hammer then turned to the task of providing for Rosamaria Durazo. On the evening of October 18th, he had his second-in-command, Occidental's president and chief operating officer, Ray Irani, come to his house. Hammer explained that he wanted Durazo to be given a contract with the company. She was to get two hundred and fifty thousand dollars from Occidental upon signing and two hundred thousand a year for life. She was also to get medical insurance and other corporate benefits.

On Friday, October 19th, Stafford Matthews delivered the revised version of the living trust. The funds for Hammer's son, Julian, were among the bequests deleted, and Hammer called Julian to explain this. His relationship with Julian had never been easy. Julian saw little of his father after Hammer and his mother separated. Then, when he was twenty-four, Julian was arrested for shooting and killing a friend. Eventually, the charges were dropped, and Hammer briefly put his son on Occidental's payroll. He used him from time to time for what he called "James Bond stuff," such as concealing microphones in Hammer's office, in his home, and even in his cufflinks, so that he could surreptitiously record the conversations of business associates. Hammer found this secret taping system espe-

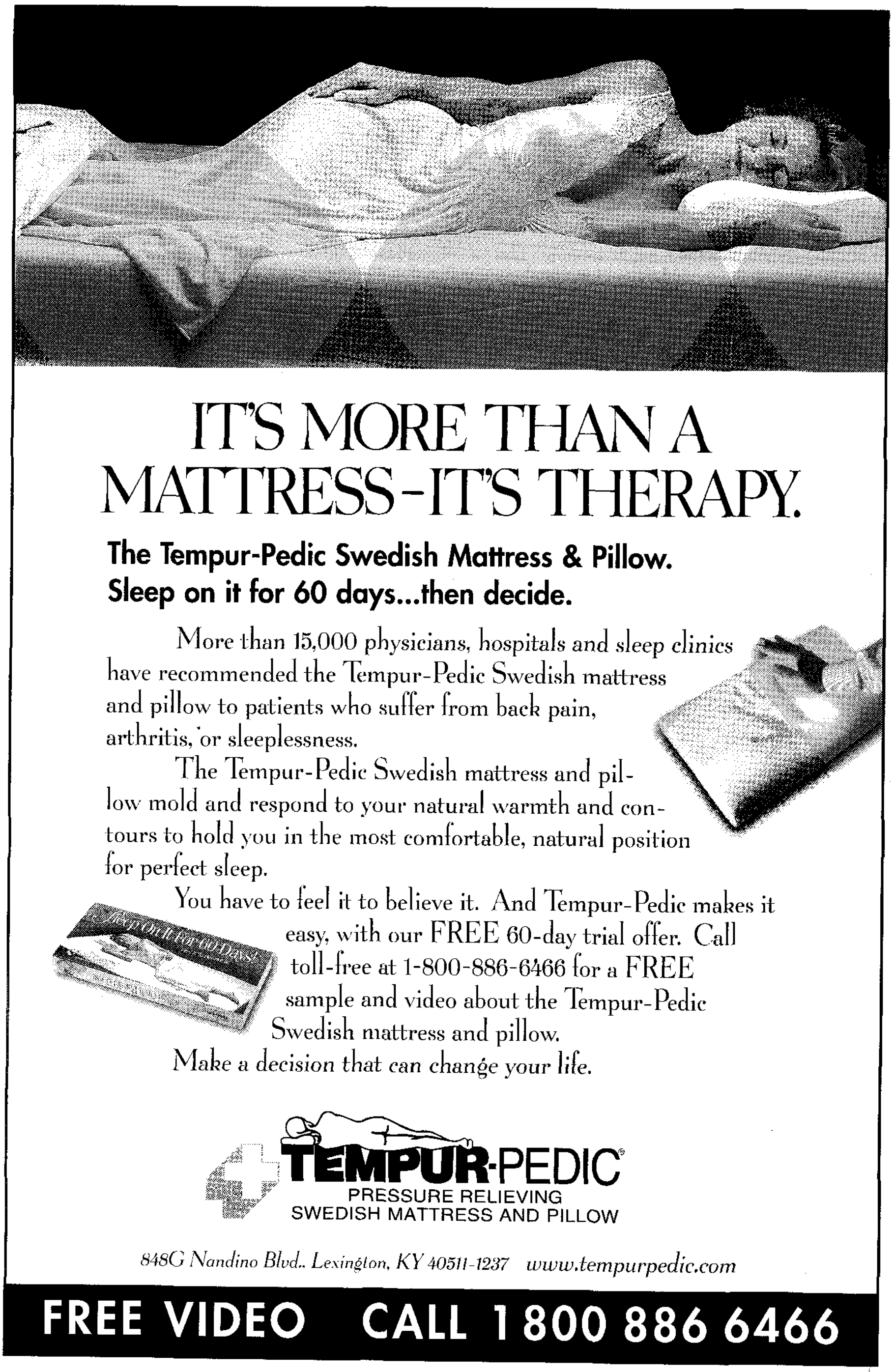
"While you were out, somebody with three names called."

cially useful for recording sensitive events, such as the disbursement of bribes, that he did not want even his confidential secretaries to know about. (See the accompanying sidebar.) Hammer paid Julian a monthly retainer. When Julian came to his father's house, he was not told about Hammer's medical condition or prognosis. His father talked to him about taxes that had become "prohibitive." He explained that to avoid levies on his estate he was going to provide for Julian outside its formal structure.

Hammer could not resolve another family problem so easily—that of his illegitimate daughter, Victoria. He had met Victoria's mother, Bettye Jane Murphy, in 1953, in Marathon, Florida, where she was working as the hostess of Laney's Supper Club, in the yacht basin where Hammer had anchored his boat. Hammer was then living in New Jersey, and had gone to Florida for a vacation while his second wife, Angela, was recovering from an operation. He brought Bettye back and quietly set her up in an apartment in New York. Hammer often promised Bettye that they would get married when he divorced Angela. But that was not to happen. Instead, he married Frances, a multimillionairess.

At the time of Hammer's marriage to Frances, Bettye was expecting his child. To keep this secret from his new wife, he moved Bettye to Mexico City, where he set up a fake marriage for her so that the child would not have his surname. When his daughter was born, he called her Victoria, after his grandmother. Every month, Bettye received a check from him through a chain of lawyers. He insisted that Bettye not tell Victoria the identity of her benefactor, but in 1964, after Victoria learned who her father was, Hammer began visiting her. He made her and her mother beneficiaries of his living trust. Now, faced with the lawsuit, he again had to conceal her. He would rely on Michael to take care of Victoria with cash after his death.

On November 1st, Hammer met with Rabbi Daniel Lapin of the Pacific Jewish Center to plan one final event: a belated bar-mitzvah ceremony. He had denied his Jewish heritage for most of his life. When he went to Russia in the twenties, he had identified himself as an atheist. When he went to Saudi Arabia and Libya in search of oil in the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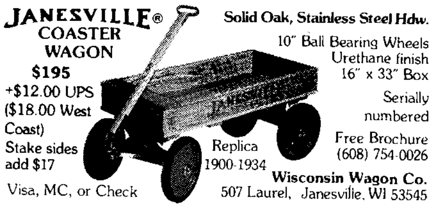
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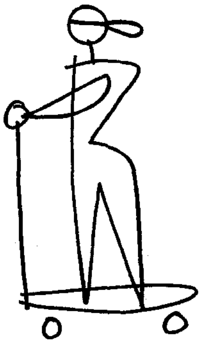
sixties, he had listed himself as Unitarian. Even in Los Angeles in the eighties, he had called himself a Protestant or a Wasp in hospital records. But now, with only weeks left to live, he planned to return to Judaism in a dramatic way. Hammer's bar-mitzvah ceremony was scheduled for December 11th, the first night of Hanukkah.

On November 12th, Hammer met with his lawyers to discuss the lawsuit brought against him by Frances's estate. In his autobiography, Hammer had portrayed a blissful marriage that spanned a third of a century. In reality, he had betrayed Frances from the very beginning, although she appeared to be unaware of this. She continued to travel with Hammer to meet heads of state until 1987, when, during a visit to the Soviet Academy of the Arts in Leningrad, she slipped and fell, and he left her on the floor while he rushed to embrace Gorbachev.

What Hammer had not fully realized, at least not until seeing a videotape of a deposition given by her executor, Robert Weiss, was that Frances had been suspicious of him from the start and had kept copious records of all the money she lent him, as well as of other financial transactions. By 1988, she was so distrustful that she rewrote her will, cutting him out and leaving almost everything to her niece, Joan Weiss. She even left Weiss the house in which she had lived with Hammer since they were married. And, at the age of eighty-seven, she was considering getting a legal separation from him. All this animosity could weigh against him: a jury might not believe that Frances would have voluntarily signed away her claim to what was, under California law, their community property. Hammer's lawyers believed that he could dispel these doubts with his testimony, but he knew that he would be dead well before the case came to trial. So it would be a battle between estates.



Early in December, Rosamaria Durazo brought two Mexican faith healers to the house. They floated Hammer on the surface of the swimming pool. Then, re-creating an Aztec ceremony, they danced around him for two days. On the evening of December 10th, only two people remained in the room with Hammer: Rosamaria Durazo and Nick Butcher. Durazo placed her stethoscope on Hammer's chest. There was no heartbeat. Butcher checked his watch. He recorded that Hammer had died at 7:22 P.M. While Durazo was collapsed in tears over Hammer's torso, Butcher telephoned Edmund Birch, the security chief at Occidental. Birch set in motion a carefully scripted scenario. Hammer's doctor came to the house to sign the death certificate, on which the cause of death was listed as cerebral arteriosclerosis. An ambulance was dispatched to take Hammer's body to the mortuary. Public-relations people drafted a press release. Locksmiths changed the locks on the doors to Occidental offices on the sixteenth floor where sensitive documents were kept. Michael Hammer and the rest of Hammer's family were notified.

About an hour later, Michael arrived at the house. He had just returned in his new Ferrari from a weekend balloon festival in Palm Springs. He sorted through his grandfather's personal effects and gave Nick Butcher Hammer's gold Rolex watch, a tie clip, and a bottle of Dom Pérignon champagne. Meanwhile, Occidental security men loaded boxes and suitcases full of papers and other items into several cars. But before they could leave they were blocked by Richard Cleary, the lawyer representing Frances Hammer's estate. He said that since Hammer's home had reverted to his wife's estate the moment he died, they had no right to remove anything from the house without the estate's permission. He called Joan Weiss, who called the Los Angeles police. The security men called Michael out to the driveway, and the standoff continued until about 1:30 A.M. Finally, an agreement was worked out whereby all the boxes were returned to a locked room in the house, to which Michael retained the key. Cleary then had an all-night locksmith change the front-door locks, effectively evicting Michael, Rosamaria Durazo, and Nick Butcher.

Reports on the police radio about the confrontation in the street alerted the night editors at the Los Angeles *Times* to Hammer's death. His obituary, drawn from a clip file that spanned nearly seven decades, had already been prepared. At 6 A.M., they flashed out over the wire service the headline "ARMAND HAMMER DIES; BILLIONAIRE, ART PATRON."

The next night, some five hundred people in formal attire gathered in the grand ballroom of the Beverly Hilton for what had become a posthumous bar mitzvah. At four o'clock the following day, Julian, Michael, and Casey went to a lawyer's office to hear the will read. When the lawyer had finished, Julian sat in shocked disbelief. His father had not kept any of the promises he had made to him shortly before he died. He had made no provision to pay off Julian's debts. He had not arranged an employment contract with Occidental. He had not provided him a multimillion-dollar inheritance. Instead, he had left him, his only son, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, which was not even enough to pay off the mortgage on his house.

It turned out that there was no great Hammer fortune. Far from being the billionaire the obituaries portrayed, Hammer had an estate worth an estimated forty million dollars. Against this sum, the estate had potential liabilities that included personal debts, legal bills, estate taxes, and commitments of millions of dollars to various charities. Not to mention the claims made in the suit by Frances's estate.

The funeral service took place at 11 A.M. in a small chapel at Westwood Memorial Park on December 13th. Among those attending the service, Ray Irani, in a sombre dark suit and tinted glasses, stood with the other twelve directors of Occidental in the front row of the chapel. When they returned from the funeral that afternoon, they would officially elect Irani chairman and chief executive officer. His first order of business would be to disassociate Occidental Petroleum from the image of Armand Hammer. The portraits and statues of Hammer were removed from company headquarters. No photographs or obituaries or homages to him appeared in the annual report. Irani would also eliminate most of Hammer's projects intended to advance his personal agenda of opening up relationships with the Communist world. Occidental had sunk vast sums of money into these projects that could never be recovered.

Michael Hammer presided over the brief ceremony at the chapel, but he would not follow in his grandfather's footsteps at Occidental. A year later, in return for signing a confidentiality agreement, he was paid a severance bonus of one and a half million dollars. As the executor of his

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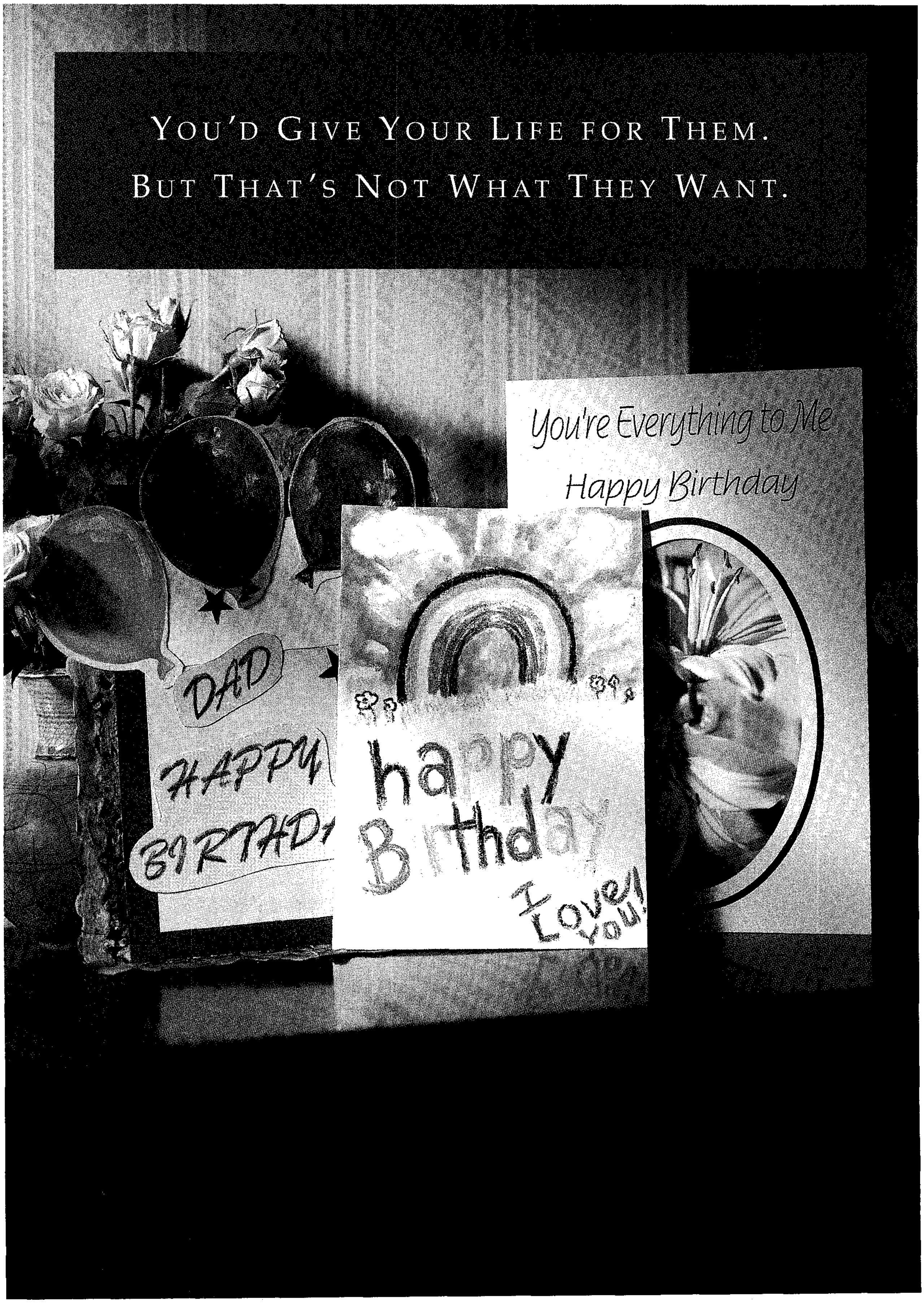
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CONTRAINDICATIONS: Hypersensitivity to any component of this medication. Active liver disease or unexplained, persistent elevations in liver function tests (see **WARNINGS**). *Pregnancy and lactation.* Atherosclerosis is a chronic process and discontinuation of lipid-lowering drugs during pregnancy should have little impact on the outcome of long-term therapy of primary hypercholesterolemia. Cholesterol and other products of cholesterol biosynthesis are essential components for fetal development (including synthesis of steroids and cell membranes). Since HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors decrease cholesterol synthesis and possibly the synthesis of other biologically active substances derived from cholesterol, they *may cause fetal harm when administered to pregnant women. Therefore, HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors are* contraindicated during pregnancy and in nursing mothers. **Pravastatin should be administered to women of childbearing age only when such patients are highly unlikely to conceive and have been informed of the potential hazards.** If the patient becomes pregnant while taking this class of drug, therapy should be discontinued and the patient apprised of the potential hazard to the fetus. **WARNINGS: Liver Enzymes —** HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors, like some other lipid-lowering therapies, have been associated with biochemical abnormalities of liver function. Increases of serum transaminase (ALT, AST) values to more than 3 times the upper limit of normal occurring on 2 or more (not necessarily sequential) occasions have been reported in 1.3% of patients treated with pravastatin in the US over an average period of 18 months. These abnormalities were not associated with cholestasis and did not appear to be related to treatment duration. In those patients in whom these abnormalities were believed to be related to pravastatin and who were discontinued from therapy, the transaminase levels usually fell slowly to pretreatment levels. These *biochemical findings are usually asymptomatic although worldwide experience indicates that anorexia*, weakness, and/or abdominal pain may also be present in rare patients. **It is recommended that liver function tests be performed before the initiation of treatment, at 6 and 12 weeks after initiation of therapy or elevation in dose, and periodically thereafter (e.g., semiannually).** Patients who develop increased transaminase levels should be monitored with a second liver function evaluation to confirm the finding and be followed thereafter with frequent liver function tests until the abnormality(ies) return to normal. Should an increase in AST or ALT of three times the upper limit of normal or greater persist, withdrawal of pravastatin therapy is recommended. Active liver disease or unexplained transaminase elevations are contraindications to the use of pravastatin (see **CONTRAINDICATIONS**). Caution should be exercised when pravastatin is administered to patients with a history of liver disease or heavy alcohol ingestion (see **CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY: Pharmacokinetics/Metabolism**). Such patients should be closely monitored, started at the lower end of the recommended dosing range, and titrated to the desired therapeutic effect. **Skeletal Muscle — Rare cases of rhabdomyolysis with acute renal failure secondary to myoglobinuria have been reported with pravastatin and other drugs in this class.** Uncomplicated myalgia has also been reported in pravastatin-treated patients (see **ADVERSE REACTIONS**). Myopathy, defined as muscle aching or muscle weakness in conjunction with increases in creatine phosphokinase (CPK) values to greater than 10 times the upper normal limit, was rare ($< 0.1\%$) in pravastatin clinical trials. Myopathy should be considered in any patient with diffuse myalgias, muscle tenderness or weakness, and/or marked elevation of CPK. Patients should be advised to report promptly unexplained muscle pain, tenderness or weakness, particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever. **Pravastatin therapy should be discontinued if markedly elevated CPK levels occur or myopathy is diagnosed or suspected. Pravastatin therapy should also be temporarily withheld in any patient experiencing an acute or serious condition predisposing to the development of renal failure secondary to rhabdomyolysis, e.g., sepsis; hypotension; major surgery; trauma; severe metabolic, endocrine, or electrolyte disorders; or uncontrolled epilepsy.** The risk of myopathy during treatment with another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor is increased with concurrent therapy with either erythromycin, cyclosporine, niacin, or fibrates. However, neither myopathy nor significant increases in CPK levels have been observed in three reports involving a total of 100 post-transplant patients (24 renal and 76 cardiac) treated for up to two years concurrently with pravastatin 10-40 mg and cyclosporine. Some of these patients also received other concomitant immunosuppressive therapies. In one single-dose study, pravastatin levels were found to be increased in cardiac transplant patients receiving cyclosporine. Further, in clinical trials involving small numbers of patients who were treated concurrently with pravastatin and niacin, there were no reports of myopathy. Also, myopathy was not reported in a trial of combination pravastatin (40 mg/day) and gemfibrozil (1200 mg/day), although 4 of 75 patients on the combination showed marked CPK elevations versus one of 73 patients receiving placebo. There was a trend toward more frequent CPK elevations and patient withdrawals due to musculoskeletal symptoms in the group receiving combined treatment as compared with the groups receiving placebo, gemfibrozil, or pravastatin monotherapy (see **PRECAUTIONS: Drug Interactions**). **The use of fibrates alone may occasionally be associated with myopathy. The combined use of pravastatin and fibrates should be avoided unless the benefit of further alterations in lipid levels is likely to outweigh the increased risk of this drug combination. PRECAUTIONS: General —** Pravastatin may elevate creatinine phosphokinase and transaminase levels (see **ADVERSE REACTIONS**). This should be considered in the differential diagnosis of chest pain in a patient on therapy with pravastatin. *Homozygous Familial Hypercholesterolemia.* Pravastatin has not been evaluated in patients with rare homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia. In this group of patients, it has been reported that HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors are less effective because the patients lack functional LDL receptors. *Renal Insufficiency.* A single 20 mg oral dose of pravastatin was administered to 24 patients with varying degrees of renal impairment (as determined by creatinine clearance). No effect was observed on the pharmacokinetics of pravastatin or its 3α-hydroxy isomeric metabolite (SQ 31,906). A small increase was seen in mean AUC values and half-life ($t^{1}/_{2}$) for the inactive enzymatic ring hydroxylation metabolite (SQ 31,945). Given this small sample size, the dosage administered, and the degree of individual variability, patients with renal impairment who are receiving pravastatin should be closely monitored. **Information for Patients —** Patients should be advised to report promptly unexplained muscle pain, tenderness or weakness, particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever. **Drug Interactions —** *Immunosuppressive Drugs, Gemfibrozil, Niacin (Nicotinic Acid), Erythromycin:* See **WARNINGS: Skeletal Muscle**. *Antipyrine:* Since concomitant administration of pravastatin had no effect on the clearance of antipyrine, interactions with other drugs metabolized via the same hepatic cytochrome isozymes are not expected. *Cholestyramine/Colestipol:* Concomitant administration resulted in an approximately 40 to 50% decrease in the mean AUC of pravastatin. However, when pravastatin was administered 1 hour before or 4 hours after cholestyramine or 1 hour before colestipol and a standard meal, there was no clinically significant decrease in bioavailability or therapeutic effect. (See **DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION: Concomitant Therapy**.) *Warfarin:* In a study involving 10 healthy male subjects given pravastatin and warfarin concomitantly for 6 days, bioavailability parameters at steady state for pravastatin *(parent compound) were not altered. Pravastatin did not alter the plasma protein-binding of warfarin.* Concomitant dosing did increase the AUC and Cmax of warfarin but did not produce any changes in its anticoagulant action (i.e., no increase was seen in mean prothrombin time after 6 days of concomitant therapy). However, bleeding and extreme prolongation of prothrombin time has been reported with another drug in this class. Patients receiving warfarin-type anticoagulants should have their prothrombin times closely monitored when pravastatin is initiated or the dosage of pravastatin is changed. *Cimetidine:* The $AUC_{0-12\,hr}$ for pravastatin when given with cimetidine was not significantly different from the AUC for pravastatin when given alone. A significant difference was observed between the AUC's for pravastatin when given with cimetidine compared to when administered with antacid. *Digoxin:* In a crossover trial involving 18 healthy male subjects given pravastatin and digoxin concurrently for 9 days, the bioavailability parameters of digoxin were not affected. The AUC of pravastatin tended to increase, but the overall bioavailability of pravastatin plus its metabolites SQ 31,906 and SQ 31,945 was not altered. *Cyclosporine:* Some investigators have measured *cyclosporine levels in patients on pravastatin, and to date, these results indicate no clinically meaningful* elevations in cyclosporine levels. In one single-dose study, pravastatin levels were found to be increased in cardiac transplant patients receiving cyclosporine. *Gemfibrozil:* In a crossover study in 20 healthy male volunteers given concomitant single doses of pravastatin and gemfibrozil, there was a significant decrease in urinary excretion and protein binding of pravastatin. In addition, there was a significant increase in AUC, Cmax, and Tmax for the pravastatin metabolite SQ 31,906. Combination therapy with pravastatin and gemfibrozil is generally not recommended. In interaction studies with *aspirin, antacids* (1 hour prior to PRAVACHOL), *cimetidine, nicotinic acid,* or *probucol*, no statistically significant differences in bioavailability were seen when PRAVACHOL (pravastatin sodium) was administered. *Other Drugs:* During clinical trials, no noticeable drug interactions were reported when PRAVACHOL was added to: diuretics, antihypertensives, digitalis, ACE inhibitors, calcium channel blockers, beta-blockers, or nitroglycerin. **Endocrine Function —** HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors interfere with cholesterol synthesis and lower circulating cholesterol levels *and, as such, might theoretically blunt adrenal or gonadal steroid hormone production.* Results of clinical trials with pravastatin in males and post-menopausal females were inconsistent with regard to possible effects of the drug on basal steroid hormone levels. In a study of 21 males, the mean testosterone response to human chorionic gonadotropin was significantly reduced ($p< 0.004$) after 16 weeks of treatment with 40 mg of pravastatin. However, the percentage of patients showing a ≥ 50% rise in plasma testosterone after human chorionic gonadotropin stimulation did not change significantly after therapy in these patients. The effects of HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors on spermatogenesis and fertility have not been studied in adequate numbers of patients. The effects, if any, of pravastatin on the pituitary-gonadal axis in pre-menopausal females are unknown. Patients treated with pravastatin who display clinical evidence of endocrine dysfunction should be evaluated appropriately. Caution should also be exercised if an HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor or other agent used to lower cholesterol levels is administered to patients also receiving other drugs (e.g., ketoconazole, spironolactone, cimetidine) that may diminish the levels or activity of steroid hormones. **CNS Toxicity —** CNS vascular lesions, characterized by perivascular hemorrhage and edema and mononuclear cell infiltration of perivascular spaces, were seen in dogs treated with pravastatin at a dose of 25 mg/kg/day, a dose that produced a plasma drug level about 50 times higher than the mean drug level in humans taking 40 mg/day. Similar CNS vascular lesions have been observed with several other drugs in this class. A chemically similar drug in this class produced optic nerve degeneration (Wallerian degeneration of retinogeniculate fibers) in clinically normal dogs in a dose-dependent fashion starting at 60 mg/kg/day, a dose that produced mean plasma drug levels about 30 times higher than the mean drug level in humans taking the highest recommended dose (as measured by total enzyme inhibitory activity). This same drug also produced vestibulocochlear Wallerian-like degeneration and retinal ganglion cell chromatolysis in dogs treated for 14 weeks at 180 mg/kg/day, a dose which resulted in a mean plasma drug level similar to that seen with the 60 mg/kg/day dose. **Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, Impairment of Fertility —** In a 2-year study in rats fed pravastatin at doses of 10, 30, or 100 mg/kg body weight, there was an increased incidence of hepatocellular carcinomas in males at the highest dose ($p < 0.01$). Although rats were given up to 125 times the human dose (HD) on a mg/kg body weight basis, serum drug levels were only 6 to 10 times higher than those measured in humans given 40 mg pravastatin as measured by AUC. The oral administration of 10, 30, or 100 mg/kg (producing plasma drug levels approximately 0.5 to 5.0 times the human drug levels at 40 mg) of pravastatin to mice for 22 months resulted in a statistically significant increase in the incidence of malignant lymphomas in treated females when all treatment groups were pooled and compared to controls ($p < 0.05$). The incidence was not dose-related and male mice were not affected. A chemically similar drug in this class was administered to mice for 72 weeks at 25, 100, and 400 mg/kg body weight, which resulted in mean serum drug levels approximately 3, 15, and 33 times higher than the mean human serum drug *concentration (as total inhibitory activity) after a 40 mg oral dose. Liver carcinomas were significantly* increased in high-dose females and mid- and high-dose males, with a maximum incidence of 90 percent in males. The incidence of adenomas of the liver was significantly increased in mid- and high-dose females. Drug treatment also significantly increased the incidence of lung adenomas in mid- and high-dose males and females. Adenomas of the eye Harderian gland (a gland of the eye of rodents) were significantly higher in high-dose mice than in controls. No evidence of mutagenicity was observed *in vitro*, with or without rat-liver metabolic activation, in the following studies: microbial mutagen tests, using mutant strains of *Salmonella typhimurium* or *Escherichia coli*; a forward mutation assay in L5178Y TK +/- mouse lymphoma cells; a chromosomal aberration test in hamster cells; and a gene conversion assay using *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. In addition, there was no evidence of mutagenicity in either a dominant lethal test in mice or a micronucleus test in mice. In a study in rats, with daily doses up to 500 mg/kg, pravastatin did not produce any adverse effects on fertility or general reproductive performance. However, in a study with another HMG-CoA reductase *inhibitor, there was decreased fertility in male rats treated for 34 weeks at 25 mg/kg body weight, although* this effect was not observed in a subsequent fertility study when this same dose was administered for 11 weeks (the entire cycle of spermatogenesis, including epididymal maturation). In rats treated with this same reductase inhibitor at 180 mg/kg/day, seminiferous tubule degeneration (necrosis and loss of spermatogenic epithelium) was observed. Although not seen with pravastatin, two similar drugs in this class caused drug-related testicular atrophy, decreased spermatogenesis, spermatocytic degeneration, and giant cell formation in dogs. The clinical significance of these findings is unclear. **Pregnancy: Pregnancy Category X. —** See **CONTRAINDICATIONS**. Safety in pregnant women has not been established. Pravastatin was not teratogenic in rats at doses up to 1000 mg/kg daily or in rabbits at doses of up to 50 mg/kg daily. These doses resulted in 20x (rabbit) or 240x (rat) the human exposure based on surface area ($mg/meter^2$). However, in studies with another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor, skeletal malformations were observed in rats and mice. There has been one report of severe congenital bony deformity, tracheo-esophageal fistula, and anal atresia (Vater *association) in a baby born to a woman who took another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor with* dextroamphetamine sulfate during the first trimester of pregnancy. PRAVACHOL (pravastatin sodium) should be administered to women of child-bearing potential only when such patients are highly unlikely to conceive and have been informed of the potential hazards. If the woman becomes pregnant while taking PRAVACHOL (pravastatin sodium), it should be discontinued and the patient advised again as to the potential hazards to the fetus. **Nursing Mothers —** A small amount of pravastatin is excreted in human breast milk. Because of the potential for serious adverse reactions in nursing infants, women taking PRAVACHOL should not nurse (see **CONTRAINDICATIONS**). **Pediatric Use —** Safety and effectiveness in individuals less than 18 years old have not been established. Hence, treatment in patients less than 18 years old is not recommended at this time. **ADVERSE REACTIONS:** Pravastatin is generally well tolerated; adverse reactions have usually been mild and transient. In 4-month long placebo-controlled trials, 1.7% of pravastatin-treated patients and 1.2% of placebo-treated patients were discontinued from treatment because of adverse experiences attributed to *study drug therapy; this difference was not statistically significant. In long-term studies, the most common* reasons for discontinuation were asymptomatic serum transaminase increases and mild, non-specific gastrointestinal complaints. During clinical trials the overall incidence of adverse events in the elderly was not different from the incidence observed in younger patients. **Adverse Clinical Events —** All adverse clinical events (regardless of attribution) reported in more than 2% of pravastatin-treated patients in the placebo-controlled trials are identified in the table below; also shown are the percentages of patients in whom these medical events were believed to be related or possibly related to the drug:

	All Events		**Events Attributed to Study Drug**	
Body System/Event	**Pravastatin (N = 900) %**	**Placebo (N = 411) %**	**Pravastatin (N = 900) %**	**Placebo (N = 411) %**
Cardiovascular				
Cardiac Chest Pain	4.0	3.4	0.1	0.0
Dermatologic Rash	4.0*	1.1	1.3	0.9
Gastrointestinal				
Nausea/Vomiting	7.3	7.1	2.9	3.4
Diarrhea	6.2	5.6	2.0	1.9
Abdominal Pain	5.4	6.9	2.0	3.9
Constipation	4.0	7.1	2.4	5.1
Flatulence	3.3	3.6	2.7	3.4
Heartburn	2.9	1.9	2.0	0.7
General				
Fatigue	3.8	3.4	1.9	1.0
Chest Pain	3.7	1.9	0.3	0.2
Influenza	2.4*	0.7	0.0	0.0
Musculoskeletal				
Localized Pain	10.0	9.0	1.4	1.5
Myalgia	2.7	1.0	0.6	0.0
Nervous System				
Headache	6.2	3.9	1.7*	0.2
Dizziness	3.3	3.2	1.0	0.5
Renal/Genitourinary				
Urinary Abnormality	2.4	2.9	0.7	1.2
Respiratory				
Common Cold	7.0	6.3	0.0	0.0
Rhinitis	4.0	4.1	0.1	0.0
Cough	2.6	1.7	0.1	0.0

*Statistically significantly different from placebo.

In the Pravastatin Primary Prevention Study (West of Scotland Coronary Prevention Study) (see **CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY: Clinical Studies**) involving 6595 patients treated with PRAVACHOL (pravastatin sodium) ($N = 3302$) or placebo ($n = 3293$) the adverse event profile in the pravastatin group was comparable to that of the placebo group over the median 4.8 years of the study. The following effects have been reported with drugs in this class; not all the effects listed below have necessarily been associated with pravastatin therapy: *Skeletal:* myopathy, rhabdomyolysis, arthralgia. *Neurological:* dysfunction of certain cranial nerves (including alteration of taste, impairment of extra-ocular movement, facial paresis), tremor, vertigo, memory loss, *paresthesia, peripheral neuropathy, peripheral nerve palsy, anxiety, insomnia, depression. Hypersensitivity Reactions:* An apparent hypersensitivity syndrome has been reported rarely which has included one or more of the following features: anaphylaxis, angioedema, lupus erythematous-like syndrome, polymyalgia rheumatica, dermatomyositis, vasculitis, purpura, thrombocytopenia, leukopenia, hemolytic anemia, positive ANA, ESR increase, eosinophilia, arthritis, arthralgia, urticaria, asthenia, photosensitivity, fever, chills, flushing, malaise, dyspnea, toxic epidermal necrolysis, erythema multiforme, including Stevens-Johnson syndrome. *Gastrointestinal:* pancreatitis, hepatitis, including chronic active hepatitis, cholestatic jaundice, fatty change in liver, and, rarely, cirrhosis, fulminant hepatic necrosis, and hepatoma; anorexia, vomiting. *Skin:* alopecia, pruritus. A variety of skin changes (e.g., nodules, discoloration, dryness of skin/mucous membranes, changes to hair/nails) have been reported. *Reproductive:* gynecomastia, loss of libido, erectile dysfunction. *Eye:* progression of cataracts (lens opacities), ophthalmoplegia. *Laboratory Abnormalities*: elevated transaminases, alkaline phosphatase, and bilirubin; thyroid function abnormalities. **Laboratory Test Abnormalities —** *Increases in serum transaminase (ALT, AST) values and CPK have been observed* (see **WARNINGS**). Transient, asymptomatic eosinophilia has been reported. Eosinophil counts usually returned to normal despite continued therapy. Anemia, thrombocytopenia, and leukopenia have been reported with HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors. **Concomitant Therapy —** Pravastatin has been administered concurrently with cholestyramine, colestipol, nicotinic acid, probucol and gemfibrozil. Preliminary data suggest that the addition of either probucol or gemfibrozil to therapy with lovastatin or pravastatin is **not** associated with greater reduction in LDL-cholesterol than that achieved with lovastatin or pravastatin alone. No adverse reactions unique to the combination or in addition to those previously reported for each drug alone have been reported. Myopathy and rhabdomyolysis (with or without acute renal failure) have been reported when another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor was used in combination with immunosuppressive drugs, gemfibrozil, erythromycin, or lipid-lowering doses of nicotinic acid. Concomitant therapy with HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors and these agents is generally not recommended. (See **WARNINGS: Skeletal Muscle** and **PRECAUTIONS: Drug Interactions**.) ***OVERDOSAGE:*** *To date, there are two reported cases of overdosage with pravastatin, both of* which were asymptomatic and not associated with clinical laboratory abnormalities. If an overdose occurs, it should be treated symptomatically and supportive measures should be instituted as required.

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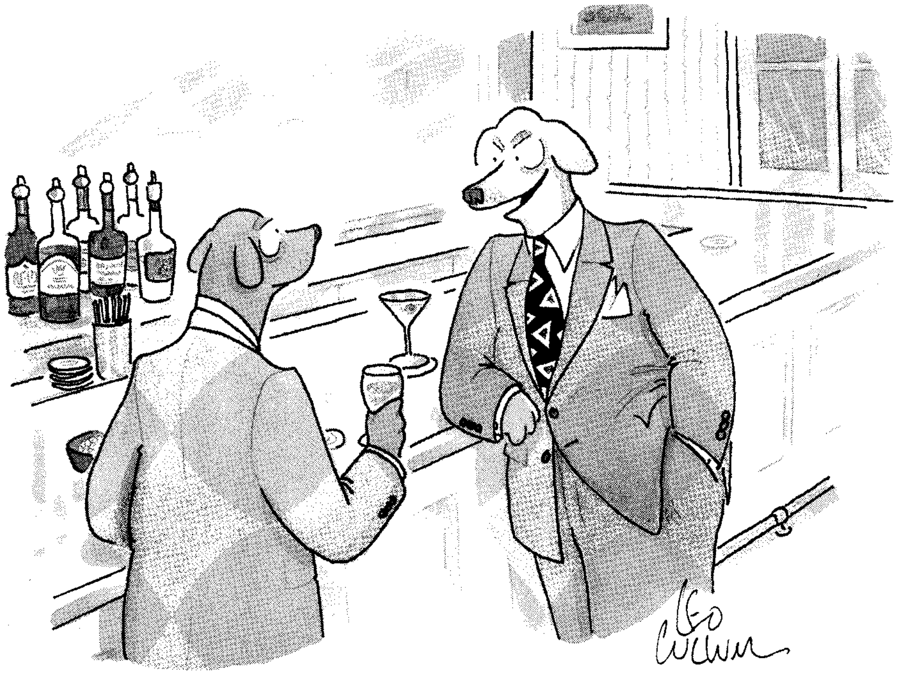

"First of all, forget everything you learned in obedience school."

• •

grandfather's will, he would soon be caught up in dealing with lawsuits against the estate that proliferated at an incredible rate. The more than one hundred claimants included the Danielle Mitterrand Foundation, which asserted that Hammer still owed two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in return for the attendance of the wife of the French President at the dinner celebrating the opening of his museum; the Salk Institute, which asserted that Hammer owed it $1,447,200 in unfulfilled pledges that he had made as part of his war on cancer; and the National Symphony Orchestra, which asserted that Hammer still owed it two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for playing "Happy Birthday" to him at his ninetieth birthday party. Both Bettye Murphy, his longtime mistress, and their daughter, Victoria, sued the estate. In 1994, after four years of litigation, the suit filed by the estate of Frances Hammer against Armand Hammer was dismissed. But there was an appeal, and in the ongoing struggle legal expenses would consume a substantial part of both estates.

HILARY GIBSON had stood alone in the row immediately behind Irani and the board of directors at the funeral, already feeling a sense of isolation. The last time she saw Hammer alive was the night of the museum opening. Irani made it clear to her that he was fully aware of both her identity and her relationship with Hammer, telling her, "Information is my business." On June 2, 1992, two Occidental security men escorted Gibson out of the Wilshire Boulevard offices. She was fired. The Armand Hammer Foundation also dispensed with her services. Gibson asked that her contractual arrangement be settled in a lump-sum payment, but the foundation refused to give her what she thought she deserved. She sued for breach of promise, and in March, 1996, she received a multimillion-dollar out-of-court settlement. Other litigation on behalf of family members and various institutions continues, and recently released documents compiled by Soviet intelligence agencies on the Hammer family since the nineteen-twenties have further compromised Hammer's reputation and contradicted his carefully constructed autobiography. The Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center has been turned over to U.C.L.A., and the huge portrait of Hammer in the entry has been taken down. The Codex Hammer was sold at auction for thirty-two million dollars. Its new owner, Bill Gates, of Microsoft, restored the old name. It is once again the Codex Leicester. ♦

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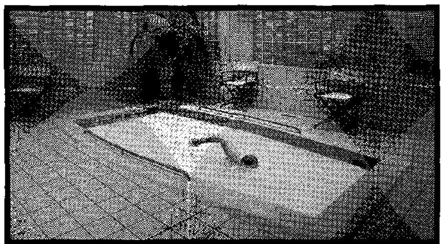

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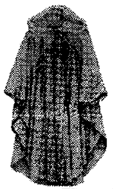

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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

THIS OTHER ENGLAND

No script, improvised rehearsals, and an uncanny glimpse of the real: it must be the new Mike Leigh movie.

BY JOHN LAHR

THE British film director Mike Leigh likes to look at people. His camera watches them with a kind of compassionate detachment that has earned him comparison to the Japanese master Yasujiro Ozu. Leigh does not make period films, with their nostalgia for servants and the de-luxe; he does not make thrillers or action movies. His gift is for the drama of behavior in an unkempt, ordinary world, and it has made him something of a cult figure: he is the maestro of the mundane. Recently, the European success of his bittersweet comedy "Secrets & Lies," which won the Palme d'Or at Cannes this year and will open the New York Film Festival at Lincoln Center next week, has turned Leigh's coterie fascination into something of a groundswell; the film is the most commercial piece of storytelling Leigh has yet made out of uncommercial, unsexy, unextraordinary material. Rather than ending on the ironic fadeout of some of his earlier comedies, "Secrets & Lies" brings the arc of its characters' lives to a satisfying—if still ironic—conclusion. In the last scene, a beleaguered mother sits with her two illegitimate daughters in the derelict back yard of her East End warren and proclaims, "This is the life, ain't it?"

The question mark is what Leigh's films are all about. His England is a place of claustrophobia and collapse, where people measure out their lives in cups of tea and trips to the pub. The characters and the rooms they inhabit seem jerry-built: they have rough edges, bright, make-do surfaces, cracks that can't be filled in. Leigh riffles through this banal world with the avidity of a pensioner at a jumble sale. His films have a particular density of detail, and an almost ruthless focus on that drab intersection of working-class and middle-class life: a zone of impoverishment, resignation, and aggression where a large part of the English population lives—and generally a cinematic no-go area. Leigh's ironic lens mediates between these two classes with an understanding particular to his own circumstances: he grew up as the son of a middle-class Jewish doctor in a working-class outpost of Manchester. "I have an awareness of and sensitivity to both those worlds," Leigh told Graham Fuller, who provided an introductory interview for " 'Naked' and Other Screenplays," a collection of Leigh's work. "I suppose I was an insider and an outsider, all at once."

Leigh, who is a shaggy fifty-three and as edgy and rumpled as the landscape he interprets, has also been both an outsider and an insider in relation to the film world—both a renegade who has taken the untried cinematic route and a mainstream success. (He was awarded an O.B.E. in 1993 for his service to the British film industry.) Each of his feature films cost only around two million dollars to make ("Secrets & Lies" was the exception, at four and a half million dollars), and these low budgets have been a way of insuring that Leigh retains complete control of his actors, his process, his cinematic language, and his product. Leigh is constitutionally not one of life's compromisers. Even as a teen-ager, he exhibited what his school friend the director Les Blair calls a "determination to be idiosyncratic." Leigh has avoided the Hollywood development system, but the thought often comes to him that "if you were to pitch one of my films as though you knew in advance what it was, none of them would ever have been made."

It's an idea to conjure with. How would movies as ambivalent and apparently uneventful as Leigh's be pitched? Here's "Naked," for instance, which won Leigh the Best Director laurels at Cannes in 1993 and is rightly considered his chef d'œuvre: A chase movie. Fade in on Johnny, an unpleasant, violent motormouth, whom we come to like for his philosophical brainstorms. He rapes a hooker, steals a car, goes to London, gets beaten up, steals money from his girl, and takes off into the night. Or take "Life Is Sweet": A family-values film. A hapless canteen cook buys a hot-

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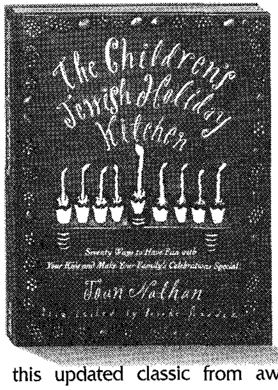
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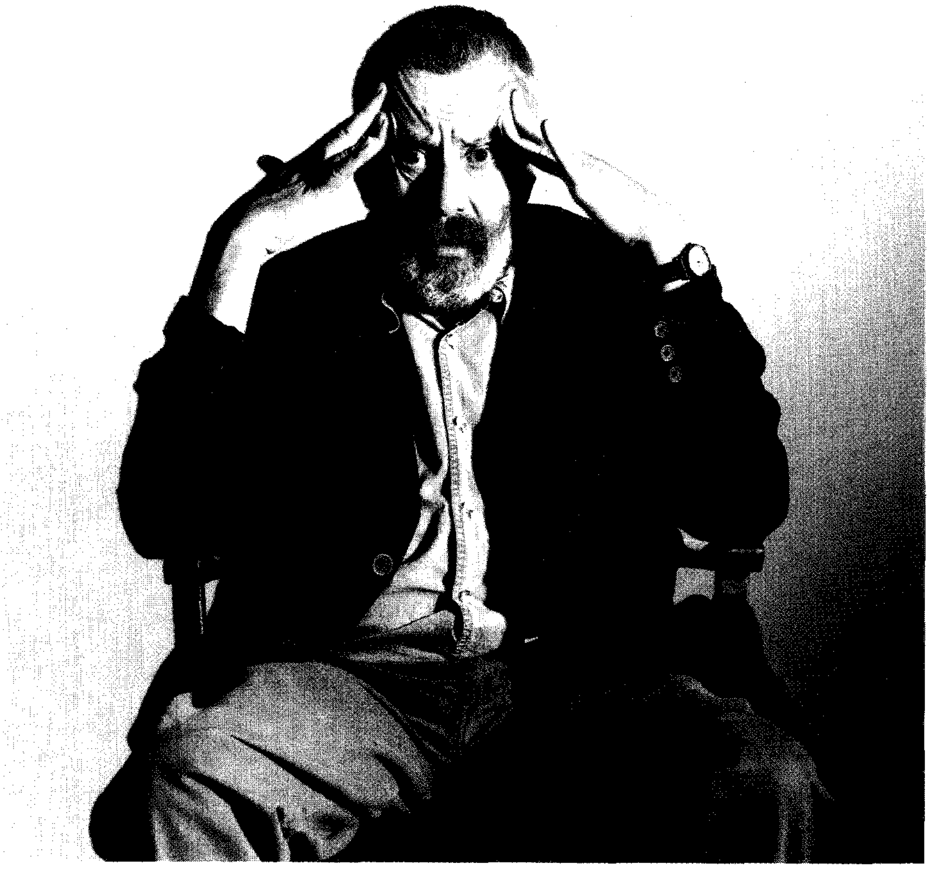
snacks truck and breaks his leg. He and his chucklehead wife bicker with their two daughters, one a quarrelsome bulimic who likes having chocolate licked off her naked body and the other a butch plumber. Or "Secrets & Lies": Think buddy movie. An adopted black female optometrist discovers that her birth mother is white and befriends her; all is revealed to her new "family," who confess their own secrets about infertility and illegitimacy at a suburban barbecue.

No. Leigh's feature films could not have been made in Hollywood, but between 1972 and 1987, when his TV films were immensely popular, his feature-film ideas were not catching on in England, either. Producers pay to play, and Leigh's storytelling precludes a committee or a storyboard. "My job is to gather the resources, then go out there and find the film by making it," Leigh has said. His irregular working style—the mystery of his struggle to make sense of a subject—is part of the tension and the fun of watching the films. Some would say it's also the problem with them. "Sometimes we feel we are seeing not so much life as 'something by Mike Leigh,'" David Thomson writes, in "A Biographical Dictionary of Film." But it's precisely the quirkiness of Leigh's plots and personalities, his habit of winkling out ambiguity from the ordinary, that makes his films such distinctive—often hilarious—cinematic journeys.

For a while in grammar school, Leigh, a lacklustre student ("Less jest, more zest," one Salford Grammar School report urged), was known as the class cartoonist. But by the age of twelve he knew that he wanted to make films. By turns a maverick and a dreamer ("There is a struggle, an anxiety, within me between the anarchist—the public exploder or piss-taker—and the slob"), he left school at seventeen, in 1960, to train as an actor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA). He wasn't a very committed or good student, but acting was part of the cinematic investigation he'd fixed on. As he told Graham Fuller, "From my very first original work"—"The Box Play" (1965)—"what I was doing was working up to making feature films." Leigh developed an unusual collaborative process of working with actors while he was putting on plays (he has written and directed twenty-two of them), one of which, "Bleak Moments," became his first film, in 1971. (The actor Albert Finney, another Salford Grammar School alumnus, gave eighteen thousand pounds for Leigh to make it, and it won the Golden Hugo at the 1972 Chicago Film Festival. Roger Ebert, writing for the Chicago *Sun-Times* in the pre-thumbs-up days, called it "a masterpiece, plain and simple.") Since then, Leigh has made more than twenty films, most of them for television. He formed his own film company in 1989 with Simon Channing-Williams, his producer, and over the last few years has won so many awards—and directed so many actors in award-winning performances—that he has become a bit of a film personage. (He is also the subject of a biography, Michael Coveney's "The World Accord-



The director Mike Leigh has avoided the Hollywood development system: "If you were to pitch one of my films as though you knew in advance what it was, none of them would ever have been made." Photograph by Dudley Reed.

ing to Mike Leigh," soon to be published here by HarperCollins.)

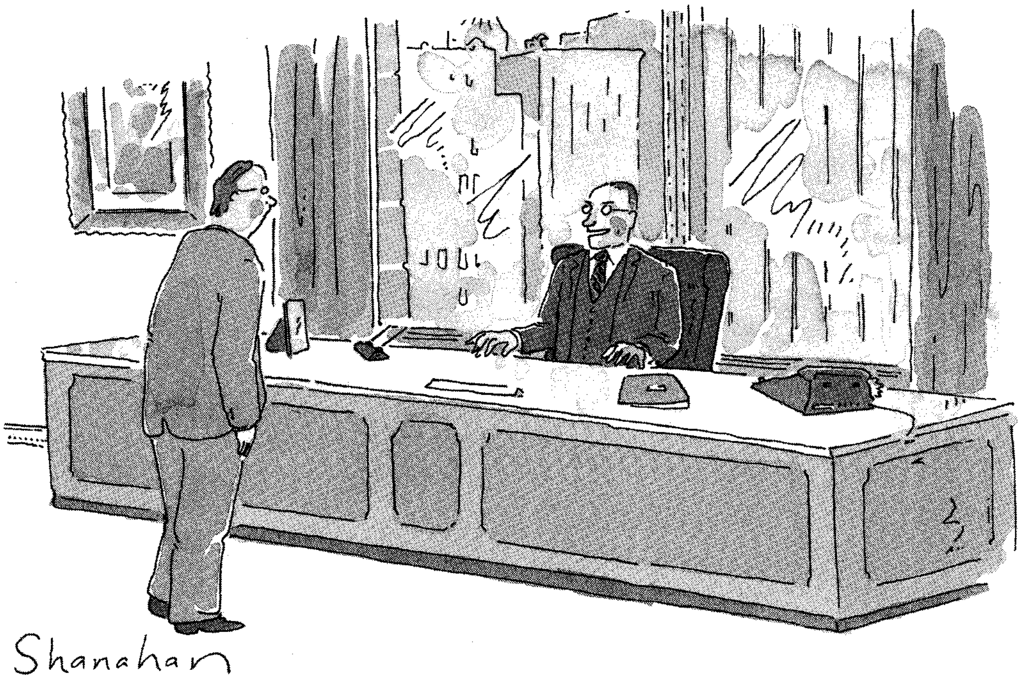
As cinema auteurs go, Leigh, whose society is largely his family of loyal co-workers, is pretty unprepossessing. On the day we talked he was a study in gray—an apt shade for the collection of pluses and minuses that life delivers in his work. His office, which is high-windowed and airy, is on Greek Street, in Soho, next door to his production company. Recently separated from his wife, the actress Alison Steadman, after twenty-three years of marriage, Leigh lives with their two sons, Leo and Toby, and the floppy dog Bonzo (he has a walk-on in "Secrets & Lies") in the distinctly unswank North London area of Wood Green. He is a dutiful and involved father who during our talk was visited by one teen-age son and waited nervously to hear from the other about his A-level results. Leigh is also something of a gastronome. "There's nothing wrong with obesity in moderation," he has been known to joke; the name of his production company—Thin Man Films—winks at Channing-Williams's girth and at his own potbelly. His cooking has improved over the years; at first, his culinary ventures were as experimental as his theatre. "The pièce de résistance was when he decided that the innards of herring were edible," Les Blair says.

In all things, it seems, Leigh goes his own way. When he travels to the West End, he prefers public transportation. "He feels that you need to stay in touch with the minutiae of day-to-day life if you're going to make films about it," says Blair. "If you travel in taxis and chauffeur-driven cars, you don't get the experiences, you don't get to see people."

Leigh also likes to walk; in fact, walking might be considered his only sport. "He is concertedly physically inept," Blair says. "For example, he once got a torn retina when he was working in the theatre, because somebody threw an electric plug to him and he missed." Even as a young man, Leigh exhibited no interest in sports. "To be totally disinterested in sport is practically sacrilege in Manchester," Blair explains. "Because Mike was not sporty, physical, or any of those things, he developed a sort of wit with his pen and with his tongue that either got him out of trouble or into it." Once, in the early sixties, Blair was with Leigh "in a rather dubious restaurant—a Liverpool Indian dive called Verlin, which we used to call Vermin"—when Leigh tried to intercede in a fracas between two prostitutes. "Whereas most people would keep their heads down and just wait for it to pass over," Blair says, "Mike stuck a word in, and ended up getting a glass thrown at him by one of the prostitutes."

Leigh speaks his mind, and "he doesn't suffer fools gladly," says the actress Marianne Jean-Baptiste, who plays Hortense, the black optometrist in "Secrets & Lies." "He gets pissed off when people are being very precious about what they're doing—and at any form of incompetence." One folk myth about Leigh is that he has a pathological distaste for Shakespeare and can't understand why anyone would want to put it on. Leigh categorically denies this, but the subtext of the tale is pertinent: his films show that he is interested not in the canon of official high culture but in what is unofficial and hidden in the culture—what goes unseen and unheard.

THE word "shame," some scholars have said, has its root in the Indo-European for "cover." As it happens, one psychoanalyst has recently linked the word for "camera," a protective chamber within which sensitive film can be exposed to light, to this same root. This is a piquant lexical irony, if true, since Leigh's camera seeks out and dissects those sensitive moments of humiliation and antagonism which are the by-products of a class-ridden society and give a defining defensive energy to English life. Leigh's plays "Abigail's Party" (1977) and "Goose-Pimples" (1981) are comic monuments to social embarrassment, and his films anatomize shame in all its ramifications. ("Secrets & Lies," as its title makes clear, is dedicated entirely to this hidden territory of self-loathing and paralysis.) Obviously, Leigh's exploration of shame has its source in his perceptions about class, but these days he doesn't want to talk about class. In print, he prefers to emphasize the universality of his stories. "The class element is merely a function of the fact that these films are English," he says in the introduction to " 'Naked' and Other Screenplays." "Irrespective of anything as idiosyncratic as the English class system, the whole world is divided into those who have and those who don't, and those who are honest and those who are dishonest." In conversation with me, Leigh takes a slightly different tack, arguing somewhat disingenuously that the working class of his youth has "to some considerable extent disappeared." He says, "I actually did grow up in a world where the streets were cobbled. It did look like a Lowry painting. Guys did wear cloth caps. They did go to work with their dinners over their shoulders. There were horses in the streets. The horses shat on the cobblestones. There was thick black smoke pouring out of chimney stacks that were as high as a cathedral." He adds, "All those things have disappeared. The only place you could have got a cloth cap in Manchester lately was from the



"Come closer, Leroux—I like to work with my hands."

woman whose period-costume shop was just destroyed by the I.R.A. bomb.”

The nature of working- and middle-class styles may have changed, but the dynamic of what the sociologist Thorstein Veblen called “invidious comparison” remains the same, and, whether Leigh likes it or not, this dynamic is what makes his work “universal.” As the English historian E. P. Thompson has said, class is not a structure or a category but something that happens between people. Leigh’s films define and negotiate this in-between realm.

Leigh pays special attention to space and spaces, which are at a premium in Great Britain, where fifty-six million souls inhabit an island about the size of Utah. In “Meantime” (1983) the members of the unemployed Pollock family get demoted before our eyes: we meet them first in the spacious, tranquil suburban comfort of a relative’s bungalow and follow them back to their granite purdah in a London high-rise. Amid the fug of cigarette smoke and kettle steam, they are humiliated by their cramped quarters; they look out at a landscape as bleak as their prospects. Here dread is palpable, and comparison deflates identity. In “High Hopes” the mournful, monosyllabic Mrs. Bender (played by Edna Doré, in an award-winning performance) lives in the shabby front room of a semidetached row house—an eyesore adjacent to a posh renovation. In a gracious state-of-the-art kitchen, Mrs. Bender’s next-door neighbor Laetitia ungraciously suggests over tea that she sell. “It’s rather a large house for one person, don’t you agree?” Laetitia asks, and the scene continues:

MRS. BENDER: It’s my ’ome.

LAETITIA: Yes, it is at the moment, I grant you that. Sugar?

MRS. BENDER: No.

LAETITIA: Fine. I’m not sure that it wouldn’t be better appreciated by a professional couple, or even a family. Biscuit?

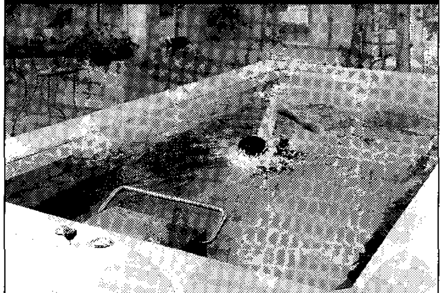
MRS. BENDER: Thank you. (*She takes one.*) I’ve always lived there.

LAETITIA: Yes, that’s as may be, but times change. (*Pause.*) I think you’d be the first to agree that you’d be far better off buying yourself a nice little modern granny-flat.

The camera watches Mrs. Bender retreat into herself, her face setting in a stoic mask on which no feeling can be read. By contrast, in “Naked,” a nihilistic world beyond shame, Johnny (David Thewlis) wears his self-loathing like a badge of honor. At the East End house where he seeks safe harbor, a girl examines his foul appearance and says, “You look like shit.” Johnny replies, “Just tryin’ to blend in with the surroundings.”

The joke is good, but so is the social observation. The self that feels ugly, unworthy, and incompetent wants to call no attention to itself. The shamefaced hide themselves away, which is what the blowsy Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn), the mother in “Secrets & Lies,” does in her East End hutch. “Stuck at home here from the age of ten,” she moans to her daughter Roxanne. “Lookin’ after Maurice and your granddad. Then I was saddled with you.” Her house is a time warp, and she blends in with the unrenovated disarray around her. She has in a sense rusticated herself—aware of her poverty, her sexual past, her ignorance, her transparent lack of “class”—and her embarrassment is hidden by bonhomie. But her shame shows through. When her abandoned illegitimate daughter, Hortense, makes contact, Cynthia, who has buried the memory of her, vomits; and when she finally meets Hortense, who is sedate, educated, and very dark-skinned, her words are defensive. “I’m sorry,” she says. “I must be a bit of a disappointment to you. You’d be better off without me.”

Leigh also explores characters who defy shame. In “Meantime” the punk Coxy (Gary Oldman) throws his humiliation onto others through his sadistic pranks. (“You’re thick, I’m ’ard,” he says to his sidekick.) He’s the precursor to “Naked” ’s Johnny, who is a terrific literary creation; a select line of hectoring wit leads from John Osborne’s Jimmy Porter to Joe Orton’s Sloane down to Leigh’s Johnny. What’s new is the ferocity of Johnny’s voice. “In the beginnin’ was the Word, and the word was ‘cancelled,’ ” he says, watching a man put up a notice on a brick wall. He goes on, “D’you get like satisfaction out of this? D’you think you’re makin’ a contribution? You’re like sort of publicly promulgatin’ vacuities? Are you with me?” The man finally turns and without a word knocks Johnny down and kicks him in the crotch. As he gets into his van and pulls away, the battered Johnny continues to mock: “Er, did I upset you?” Johnny’s only sure cover is compelling language: words—comical, hysterical, apocalyptic—spill out of him, provoking extreme responses from the world. His character—an extraordinary act of imagination by Thewlis, who won Best Actor at Cannes for the role—rep-



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resents the finest fruit of Leigh's collaboration with talented actors. "I could work conventionally as a writer, but it wouldn't be so good," Leigh says. "I am working with actors not as co-authors, not as pens. I'm *using* the acting. The acting is the medium, because we are talking about characters, about people."

OVER the decades, Leigh's method of working has attracted some of the most talented actors in England, including Alison Steadman, Jane Horrocks, Claire Skinner, Liz Smith, Brenda Blethyn, Jim Broadbent, Stephen Rea, Antony Sher, Phil Daniels, Gary Oldman, and Tim Roth. A conventional acting job is strictly interpretative: the actor arrives, learns the lines, and blocks the moves; he already knows the story and the trajectory of his character from the script. Makeup, props, and costumes are primarily someone else's decision. Not in a Mike Leigh film, where everything, at least until Leigh decides to cut it short, is up for discussion. "It's a massive act of faith, because you don't know where you're going with him," the production designer Alison Chitty says. "By the time the film has been shot, I still don't know *what* film we've made, which is a very extraordinary situation."

Leigh's process is a kind of treasure hunt, in which his collaborators bring stuff back from their lives and pick over it with the director to make up a story whose general parameters are growing in Leigh's mind but which is unknown to the group. The generic term "improvisation," while it's not wrong, is not exactly right, either, for the epic undertaking whose rules Leigh sets out at the first company get-together. "The first thing I say, and it's terribly important that I say it, is 'In five months' time'—or three months', or whatever—'we are going to go out on location with a film crew and make up a film. What we are going to do between now and then is merely to assemble the raw materials to arrive at the premise for that investigation. We are not going to create a piece of work in that time. We are not going to create the artifact itself.' " The inquiry takes the actors' minds off immediate, appealing results—frees them, as Leigh says, from "the idea of having to be interesting, illuminating, funny, or sad," from everything "but having to be real."

The seeds of this approach were sown when, after the disappointment of RADA, Leigh took a life class at the Camberwell School of Art, where he had what he calls a "clairvoyant flash." "They were very hot on getting you to look at things properly, to go out with your sketchbook and draw people and buildings," he explained in the introduction to " 'Naked' and Other Screenplays." "I realized that what I was experiencing as an art student—and what I most definitely hadn't experienced as an actor—was that working from source and looking at something that actually existed and excited you was the key to making a piece of art."

"You choose a character from your life and you base the character on that," explains Timothy Spall, a comic star of earlier Leigh works whose range is showcased in the role of Maurice, a brooding, gentle photographer, in "Secrets & Lies." At that point, the story of the character begins, with Leigh watching, coaxing, disagreeing, and, as a plot starts to evolve in his mind, making decisions about the character's history. Rehearsals—essentially scriptless—start early, and once an actor is commanded to go "into character" he or she stays in it until Leigh says it's O.K. to come out. This can be after an hour or after many hours, at rehearsal or at home. Leigh is indefatigable. "I went into a supermarket in character as Angela," Janine Duvitski says in Coveney's book; she was researching her role as the fawning nurse in "Abigail's Party." "I hadn't had time to get any food for my dog, so I picked up this tin of Chum. And suddenly, there was Mike—you never know whether he's following you or not—leering around the corner of the dog-food section, whispering cheekily, 'Your character doesn't have a dog!' "

"It's an actor's dream, really," Marianne Jean-Baptiste says. "To know every detail, to carry a handbag and know that everything that this person would have in the handbag is there." Jean-Baptiste had already studied optometry for several months at City University in London, even giving eye tests, to construct the character of Hortense, whose father was dead, when Leigh killed off her mother. Jean-Baptiste says, "I thought, Oh no, please don't do this. She's already lost her father. Can you please not take her mother?" But that development ultimately sent Hortense in search of her birth mother and made her character the centerpiece of "Secrets & Lies"—which Jean-Baptiste didn't know until she saw a screening of the film.

In Leigh's long, gruelling search for a narrative, secrecy is imperative. He once put up a Second World War poster in the rehearsal hall which was a joke about his technique: it said "Careless Talk Costs Lives." He explains, "As an actor, you cannot go into an improvised situation in character spontaneously and truthfully if you know things that your character wouldn't know." He commands actors to "walk away"—to do what the actors call a "pop-out"—when he needs to stop an improvisation to impart information to a particular actor which might influence the other characters. Actors are forbidden to discuss their characters outside rehearsal or to discuss anybody else's character motivation, so that, as Spall says, "they only know what they see when they're improvising with you." (The character of Hortense literally didn't meet the characters in her birth mother's family until the day before the final barbecue scene was shot—a nine-hour improvisation—because that's when she would have met them in real life.) Leigh's manipulations have only one end: to heighten the reality of the actor's behavior in the moment and preserve the purity of that moment. "It's like walking in a beautifully illuminated tunnel where you can see only about one inch in front of you," Spall says.

It isn't until just before shooting begins that the film has a structure: a scene breakdown written by Leigh, according to Coveney, "on three or four pages—his neat, discursive scrawl set out in neat lines and boxes—indicating the number of the scene, the location, the characters involved and a one-line summary of either what happens or what is discussed. The scenes are then rehearsed and developed on location in as chronological a sequence as possible." Most of the actors' research doesn't get into the filmed story, but it gets into the texture and authority of their performances. The process of moving from improvisation to written dialogue is a mysterious one, which Spall apologizes for calling "magical." Somehow, Leigh gets the actors to produce a rabbit without letting them hold the hat. "You've just improvised it; then you construct the thing with him," Spall says. "You're semi in character, semi out. You're writing it with him. Sometimes one line is the result of an hour of babble. You end up saying, 'Fuck me, how did we do that?' " ♦

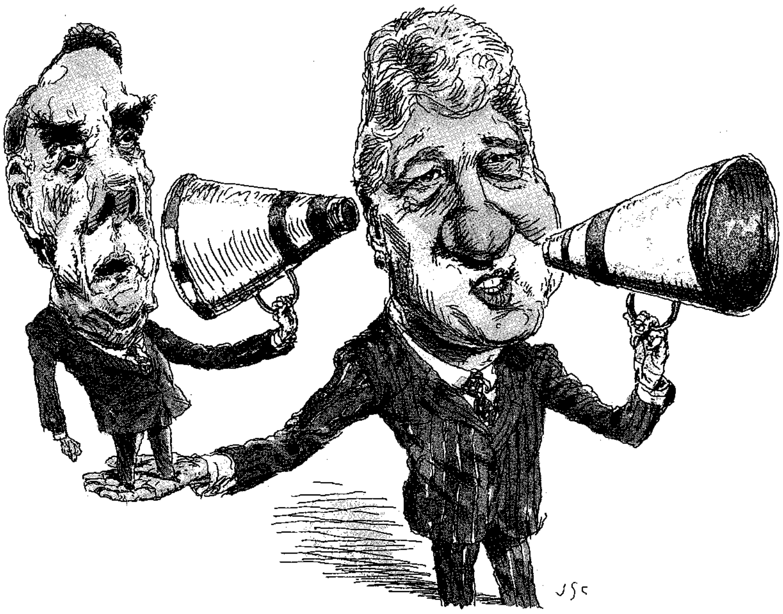
THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

RUNNING ON

It's morning in America—again.

BY MICHAEL KELLY

ON Wednesday of last week, the morning in Pueblo, Colorado, was nearly perfect. The sky was blue and the sun was bright and hot, and there wasn't a drop of humidity in the air. The Pueblo County courthouse, which was built in 1908, is a handsome block of white sandstone, fronted with massive Corinthian columns and topped by a tin dome of vaguely Byzantine parentage. On the pediment above the columns are chiselled the words "Vox Populi Vox Dei" ("the Voice of the People, the Voice of God"), testimony to a time when the passion for democracy was so strong it tempted men to blasphemy. On this later day, when President Clinton stopped by the courthouse in a campaign swing arcing across Missouri, Colorado, Arizona, and California, there wasn't much emotion evident. The street in front of the courthouse and a parking lot behind it were pretty well packed, and up against a row of heavy steel crowd-control fences in front of the speaker's platform people were crammed body to body, but it was a happy, unthreatening crowd: the average age of those in the front was about eleven. Students from public schools all over Pueblo had been excused from classes, given specially stamped tickets that allowed them access to the area directly in front of the stage, and bused to the courthouse before most adults arrived. They filled the area in the front, and, although they had been waiting for hours by the time Clinton arrived, they were still full of exuberant good cheer, waving "Clinton-Gore '96" posters and "U.S.A." balloons that they had been given by the campaign, and yelling "Hi, Bill!" and "Look at me, Bill!" Behind the children, the ranks were thinner, but they had been cunningly arranged by rope lines and riot fences to form masses in the right places, so that the event seemed larger and more festive than it was.



Bill Clinton's great ability as a political performer lies in his prolixity. Merely addressing what he says is an exhausting, endless chore.

JOHN CUNEO

The President appeared before the people suddenly and theatrically, walking out of the dark open front door of the courthouse, framed visually by the large white columns on either side and aurally by the amplified strains of "Hail to the

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Chief." He strode down the stone steps, which had been lined with flags, and up to the platform and onto the podium. He gave a long speech. It was not a good speech in any classical sense—it was, as most of his speeches are, too multitudinous in specifics, and lacking in coherence—but it was casual and fluid, moving from one part to another with an internal rhythm. It was likable, and the man who was delivering it was likable, too. Above all, it was relentlessly sunny, assuring those who were listening that they lived in a great and good time.

Sitting on the steps of the half-empty press platform, enjoying the sun on my face and the sight of a performing politician going through his paces with such easy, lazy strength, I had a feeling I had been there before, and, of course, I had. Bill Clinton in the early autumn of 1996 is exactly where he planned to be, and where his smart strategists planned to have him. He has run not as George Bush in 1988 but as Ronald Reagan in 1984, and this campaign is "Morning in America II." The carefully built crowds, the insistently Presidential nature of the President in his public appearances, the heavy reliance on human props in the form of local heroes or hard-luck stories (in Phoenix later that day he added to his schedule a hospital visit to the conservative icon Barry Goldwater; in St. Louis the night before, he had spoken movingly of a "beautiful ten-year-old boy" who had died in the crash of T.W.A. Flight 800, and whom, incredibly, he presented as a martyr of sorts because the child had declined to appear in a political advertisement against Clinton), and even the personal mannerisms (Clinton's formerly limp salute has become a Reaganesque beauty, crisp and snappy without being pompous)—it is all Reagan '84, the candidate as the leader of an America that is a shining city on a hill. And Bob Dole is all Walter Mondale, the dark man in the corner carping that it isn't morning at all—it's evening, and night is approaching fast.

A YEAR ago, Clinton's strategists thought that the President was going to have to run on the strength of relatively minor claims of nation-improving—he had signed the Family Medical Leave Act and the Brady Bill, had banned some species of assault weapons, had put more police officers on the streets, and so on. What's more, they felt sure that even these modest assertions would have to fight against a prevailing public sentiment that the nation was, in the language of the pollsters, "on the wrong track," not "heading in the right direction." It appeared that the argument to reëlect Clinton would have to be based on fear of the alternative, rather than on a positive rationale. Two things happened to change this. The first was that the economy, which had been running at a modestly strong clip, got stronger and stayed that way. The second was that Clinton waged the fear campaign, and won it, in the context of the 1995 budget face-off with Newt Gingrich's 104th Congress. This victory, due almost entirely to Clinton's superior demagogic abilities, utterly changed the dynamic between the White House and Congress. Gingrich and company argued that the Republicans were saving the children from coming of age in a bankrupt America, while Clinton and the Democrats argued that *they* were saving the old folks from being tossed in the gutter, and Clinton made the more convincingly frightening case. Blamed for shutting down the government, the Republicans' need for accomplishments suddenly outweighed their desire to deny Clinton accomplishments of his own. Thus, the election year saw the passage of the first minium-wage increase in five years, the end of welfare as a federal entitlement, and the Kennedy-Kassebaum health-insurance-reform act.

By the summer of 1996, Clinton's pollsters, the New York firm of Penn & Schoen, had evidence that the balance of belief was reversing itself: for the first time in years, as many voters believed that the country was heading in the right direction as believed the contrary. Clinton saw the change coming early, and recognized its significance.

The President decided that, while he would not abandon fear as a campaign theme (the phrase "Dole-Gingrich" recurs endlessly), he would subordinate it. Partly hidden within the Morning campaign's sunny positivism is a relentlessly attacking negative campaign. Although Clinton frequently proclaims, in Reaganesque terms, that he will not stoop to "the politics of who is to blame," he does just that, all the time. In his St. Louis speech, he told the voters that when the Republicans had their turn in power "they said, 'We'll balance the budget by giving people like the President, who didn't need it, a tax cut, and cutting Medicare, destroying Medicaid's guarantee of thirty years to poor children and pregnant women, and middle-class families with members with disabilities, and the elderly in nursing homes, by cutting back on education when we need to be investing more, by weakening our environmental protection when we need to be doing more.' " The Clinton campaign's massive program of television advertising has overwhelmingly featured negative ads, and has been notable for its rawness. A commercial attacking Dole for his opposition to the Family Medical Leave Act that was released last week in a number of battleground states juxtaposed Dole's opposition with the death from cancer of a twelve-year-old girl called Melissa. "Melissa lived every moment," her mother says. "She maintained that positive attitude until the last day," her father adds. "Bob Dole led a six-year fight against Family Leave," the announcer declares. "President Clinton understands the struggle that families go through," the mother says.

Dole did not see the climate change coming and did not react when it arrived.

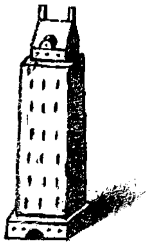
THE COMBER

A moment before the comber turns into
A breaker—sea-spray, raggedy rainbows—
Water and sunlight contain all the colors
And suspend between Inishbofin and me
The otter, and thus we meet, without my scent
In her nostrils, the uproar of my presence—
My unforgivable shadow on the sand,
Even if this is the only sound I make.

—MICHAEL LONGLEY

The tonal parameters of the contest between him and Clinton were set in what amounted to their first debate—Clinton's 1996 State of the Union Address and Dole's response. Clinton played his prolix version of Reagan, accentuating the positive as he ran through his long laundry list of America's successes in the past four years and his promises of more successes in the next four, calling on heroes in the audience, and stressing the themes of unity and progress. Dole played his dour version of Mondale, standing uncomfortably before the camera to warn the people that they lived in a dangerous and foreboding time, and in a nation at risk.

It is in theory possible for a Midnight in America argument to beat a Morning in America argument, if the former is very strong and the latter is very weak. That is the faint hope of the Dole campaign as it prepares for its last chance—the Presidential debates of late September and October. In this regard, it is getting difficult not to simply feel pity for Dole. Clinton's great ability as a political performer lies in his talent for cloaking his negative message with a positive one. It is a talent for weaving conflicting and disparate elements into a dense, intricate whole. Merely addressing what Clinton says is an exhausting, endless chore, as George Bush found, because he says so much and because the things he says are all so mixed together—some are true, some not; some are important, some are meaningless; some have nothing to do with Clinton; some are real, some are vapor.



The speech that Clinton gave the afternoon of Tuesday, September 10th, at Samuel Shephard Gateway Educational Park, in St. Louis, is a fair example of the President in action. Here is a partial list of the things the President claimed, or seemed to claim, credit for: the vote that day by the United Nations to ban nuclear testing, which Clinton suggested was the result of his determination "to lift the cloud of nuclear threats from our children and our future" (in reality, it had little to do with Clinton); the "lowest unemployment rate in seven and a half years, ten point five million new jobs, wages going up again for the first time in a decade" (true, and partly due to Clinton); passage of an expanded earned-income tax-credit program (true), which meant that "fifteen million hardworking American families got a tax cut, so they would always want to stay off welfare and keep working" (vapor); passage of the Family Medical Leave Act (true), which meant that "twelve million families got to take a little time off from work without losing their jobs for the birth of a baby or the illness of a parent" (true); passage of an increase in the minimum wage, which meant that "ten million Americans on October the first are going to get an increase in their minimum wage" (true); a "crime bill that put one hundred thousand police on the street" (false) "and banned assault weapons" (partly true: not all are banned); cleaning up "more toxic-waste sites in the last three years than were cleaned up in the previous twelve years" (true); bringing the deficit down "in each of the four years that I've been President" (true) "for the first time since before the Civil War" (meaningless: for several decades after the Civil War the government ran surpluses); a "dramatic" reduction in the murder rate in St. Louis and the crime rate generally in the nation (nothing to do with Clinton).

To mount a successful counter to a cotton-candy confection of this sort requires an ability to argue on Clinton's level, and on his terms—to argue both thematically and particularly, and to do so with a suppleness of mind and a facility of tongue matching Clinton's. Dole did this in his superb acceptance speech at the Republican Convention, but that was an atypical performance. Dole's favorite recourse when he is faced with the task of explaining an idea beyond two clauses is to mutter "whatever" and shut up. He can't grasp the idea that his opponent is operating on two contradictory levels at once, running a Terror Stalks the Nursing Home within a larger Morning in America campaign.

Last week, as Clinton was touring the West, Dole was back in Washington delivering what was billed as a pep talk. He talked about the campaign against him. "Fear," he said. "That's all they've got. They don't have any ideas. They don't have any agenda. . . . All they have is fear."

They do have that, and they use it. But they now have a good deal more as well. And Bob Dole seems to be the only man in politics who doesn't know it. ◆

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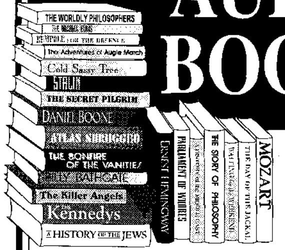

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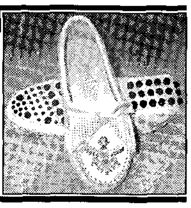

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

IN SEARCH OF BEN LINDER'S KILLERS

What did we fail to understand about the war between the Sandinistas and the Contras? An investigation into the death of an American engineer in the remote province of Jinotega reveals the untold story of a revolution.

BY PAUL BERMAN

DURING the nineteen-eighties, there was a neighborhood in Managua, Nicaragua, known as Gringolandia—a district of hotels, flophouses, private homes, and open-air restaurants filled with visitors from Berkeley, Cambridge, Manhattan, Madison, and other American places. At one corner of Gringolandia stood the grotesque white modern pyramid of the Hotel Intercontinental Managua, and along the streets running west from the hotel were elegant Miami-style houses, some of them cracked and half ruined from a long-ago earthquake and from the revolution and the economic collapse. Still farther to the west were blocks of grim working-class houses built in the style of the Spanish Middle Ages, except with roofs of corrugated zinc, and on some of the weedy lots were tumble-down shanties made of wood scraps and pieces of cardboard. And in just that way the Americans, too, came in several varieties.

The largest number of them had come to see the Sandinista People's Revolution out of curiosity and sympathy, and wished by the mere fact of visiting to make a personal protest against the Reagan Administration and its anti-Sandinista policies. As many as a hundred thousand Americans tramped around Nicaragua in that spirit, and sooner or later all those people spent the night at a Gringolandia hotel or gathered around a communal table at one of the restaurants.

A second group, much smaller, consisted of journalists in their twenties and thirties—not so much the salaried reporters from the big-time media (those people stayed away from Managua's American community) but the scrappy stringers and freelancers, the writers for alternative weeklies (I was one of those), together with a crowd of would-be reporters and photographers on the prowl for their first good story. The journalists rented rooms and sometimes entire houses from middle-class Managua families whose members had gone into exile, and they lived in a fairly comfortable style, by Nicaraguan standards—even if the running water was cut off two days a week and the electric power failed three times a day and the phones were always on the blink.

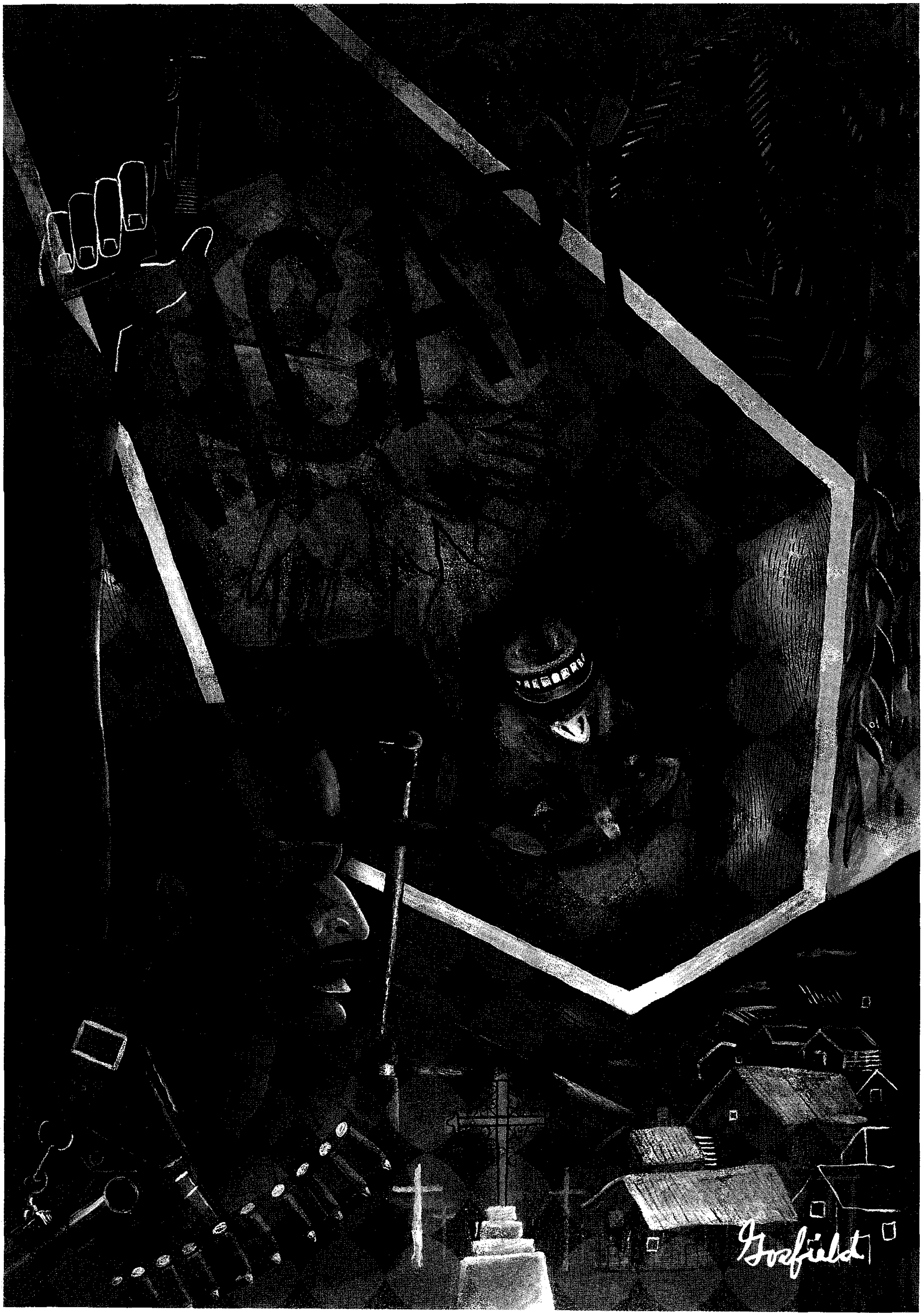
The people who gave Gringolandia its glamour and its spirit were neither touring protesters nor journalists. They were the "internationalists," which is to say the volunteer workers—people from around the world but especially from the American universities and the liberal churches who had come down to Nicaragua to lend their energy to the revolution. Most of the internationalists put in a few weeks or months of hard labor on the coffee harvest or building a health clinic, and then went home. But there were quite a few others—probably several hundred at any given time—who held regular jobs with the Sandinista organizations and worked on projects that lasted for years, sometimes in Managua, sometimes in the countryside. These people were poor. Mom and Dad back home might send a few dollars, but otherwise they had to survive on the salaries offered by the Sandinistas, paid in cordobas, the value of which depreciated by the hour. Unless someone lent them a decent house, the internationalists ended up living pretty much as ordinary Nicaraguans did—boarding in places where five or ten people might crowd into two or three rooms under a zinc roof, with a single fluorescent tube for light, a primitive stove, and an evil-smelling, seatless toilet that flushed only sometimes.

Life in Managua was exhausting. The buses were overcrowded and half-way broken-down, the sun was a blast furnace every afternoon, and nothing worked the way it was supposed to work. Still, the city was reasonably safe, and most of the provincial towns and the rich farmlands along the Pacific Coast were safe enough as well. But the Reagan Administration was backing the Contra guerrillas in their effort to overthrow the Sandinista People's Revolution, and in several of the remoter regions the fighting was intense. The most frightening areas were in the frontier zones, where the hamlets and farms merged into the jungle: in the northern mountain provinces of Jinotega and Nueva Segovia and in a few other places, and along the Atlantic Coast, where the Miskito Indians lived.

The internationalists usually stayed out of those areas. Yet there were a handful whose work kept them there for months, or even years. The internationalists all entertained the idea that Sandinista Nicaragua was going to pioneer a new and better kind of society for poor countries around the world, if only the Contras and the Reagan Administration could be beaten off; and the handful in the war zones staked their lives on that belief. And of those few no one was graver in his commitment or clearer about the dangers than Benjamin Linder, of Portland, Oregon.

Linder moved to Nicaragua in 1983, freshly graduated from the University of Washington in Seattle with a degree in mechanical engineering—a short and skinny young man with eyeglasses and a plastic pocket protector to carry his pens. He spent a year and a half work-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOSH GOSFIELD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Linder's death was a sensational story. Here was an American citizen dead as a result of Ronald Reagan's Contra policy.

ing for the electric utility in Managua, and in his time off he amused himself by teetering around on a unicycle, got up in a clown suit and a bulbous rubber nose. Everywhere he went, little children ran after him, astonished at the sight and nearly rioting with excitement. Then he moved north and went to work on a slightly harebrained but entirely commendable project to build a couple of tiny hydroelectric plants in the villages of Jinotega, where such a thing as hydroelectric power had never existed.

Jinotega lies on the border with Honduras. The Contras maintained their headquarters on the Honduran side and slipped easily into the Jinotegan mountains to stage attacks. Linder's first village was El Cuá, which turned out to be a favorite target. The Contras would come charging down the road, shouting, "We are the sons of Reagan!" The United States supplied land mines, and the Contras laid them in the unpaved highway. Commercial truck drivers from Managua refused to drive anywhere near El Cuá. One day, Linder tuned his radio to the Contra broadcasts and heard a voice describing his own project, El Cuá's proposed new mini-hydroelectric plant, as something that ought to be destroyed. He had written to his parents, "I'd be lying if I said that there isn't anything to worry about. There is." Yet he was not discouraged, and he made his way back and forth from Managua to El Cuá, arranging supplies and organizing the tasks and entertaining the village with his rubber nose and his clown act.

Linder's fellow-workers were a couple of Americans—a machinist and a solidarity activist—and a team of local people. Under his guidance, the group put together a crude electric turbine and housed it in a brick shed beside a stream. They strung up a few power lines, and El Cuá entered the modern world. The Sandinistas maintained a health clinic in the village, and for the first time the clinic was able to refrigerate its medicines. Teachers offered night classes. Even the clothing styles changed. The villagers bought electric irons, and suddenly everyone's clothes were handsomely pressed—like city folk! No longer like hicks and peasants! Having performed his first miracle, Linder decided, with the permission of the Sandinista authorities, to build the second hydroelectric plant, in the next village up the road, if you could call it a road. This place was Bocay (more formally, San José de Bocay), twenty miles north of El Cuá and more wretched yet. Bocay was a frontier settlement. It was in the mountains, where the river fords and the jungle prevented the Sandinista People's Army from providing even as much security as existed in El Cuá. In the hills above Bocay, the Contras were everywhere.

LINDER was, of course, a puritan, not in his prescriptions for everyone else but in his own behavior—a Goody Two-Shoes, as one of his fellow-workers put it. He liked to dance, but there were no drugs for him, and no rum extravaganzas of a tropical afternoon except when socially unavoidable. Not much in the way of women, either, though after he broke up with his college girlfriend, back in the States, he did try, with notable ineptness, to find someone new—a Latin woman, ideally. But on the twin themes of the Sandinista revolution and practical technology his passions were uninhibited, and he got along best with people whose enthusiasms were the same. In Managua, he sometimes hung out with a freelance news photographer named Larry Boyd and with Larry's companion, Joan Kruckewitt, who worked as a stringer for ABC Radio. Larry and Joan rented a pleasant middle-class house and paid a Managua woman named Hortencia Obando to do the housekeeping. Hortencia's children romped around the kitchen, and Linder would come over to bask in the luxury.

Joan was a Berkeley girl who had arrived in Managua the same year he had, and she would peer down at his scrawny figure—she was five feet seven—and reflect that he and she were schoolmates, in a fashion: the Managua class of '83, suffering together in the tropical revolution. Yet she never knew what to say when he was around. Linder was too much the nerd for her taste, and the circus clowning put her off. Larry, on the other hand, genuinely enjoyed Linder's visits. Larry was always out in front of the house, toiling on his beat-up Subaru. His idea of a good time was a lively discussion of car engines or camera lenses or the relative merits of Soviet and American weaponry, and he and Linder got along famously.

Now and then, Linder met real engineers, and those people were, in his eyes, more congenial yet. There was the case of Rebecca Leaf, who might have seemed an unlikely friend. Rebecca came out of M.I.T., though it had taken her a while to graduate, as a result of a long hippie interlude of pottery-making in a Massachusetts barn and socialist virtue on a kibbutz. She arrived in Managua, ready to put her skills to use, and Linder took her for a walk through the streets. They came across a giant puppet, double human size—with a normal-sized man inside—clowning around with a couple of drummers and a guy improvising poetry. The performers recognized Linder as the famous unicyclist, and the poet launched into a mischievous verse about a gray streak in Rebecca Leaf's hair. She thinks she is pretty but looks like a peeled coconut, the poet declaimed. Linder loved that kind of thing. A city of color and theatre—that was his Managua. But Rebecca was restrained. Linder invited her to sit with him at one of the innumerable bars and restaurants, where people with a pocketful of cordobas listened to high-volume scratchy music tapes. She preferred to stay at home.

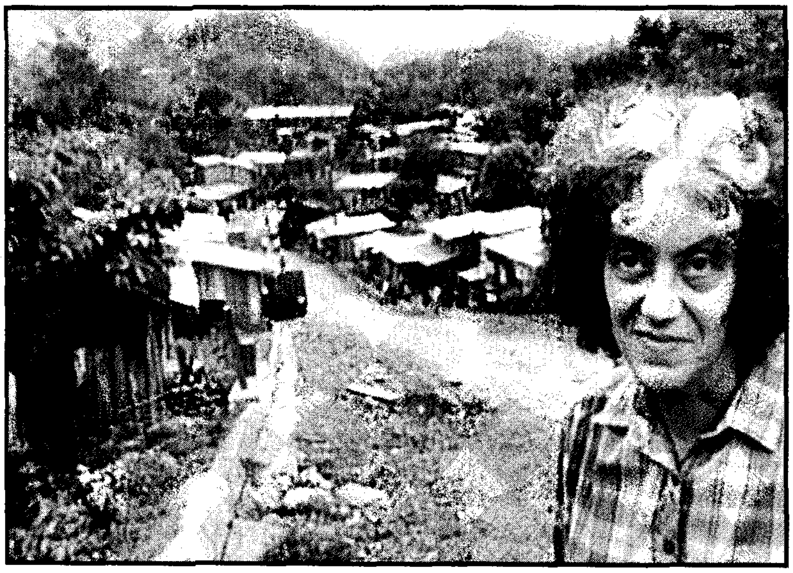
Linder and Rebecca did have a few points in common; both were the children of Jewish doctors, for instance. But engineering was the main connection. They conferred about the work habits of their Nicaraguan colleagues, which were, from their American engineers' point of view, unbelievably sloppy; and about the lack of supplies. "How many Nicaraguans does it take to screw in a light bulb?" Linder liked to say. "None—there are no light bulbs!" Rebecca worked at the Managua electric utility and served as the Managua coördinator for Linder's project up in Jinotega. They boarded in the same house in Managua for a while, and they thought about pooling resources to buy a place of their own somewhere in the capital—just to make life less of a struggle. It was not because of anything romantic between them. Dealing with practical problems was their shared pleasure.

It must have been his engineer's passion for problem solving that brought Linder to Bocay. The hydroelectric plant at El Cuá was a success, but he could easily imagine something better and stronger. And so, on April 28, 1987, he and his crew of Nicaraguans took their shovels and tools and climbed a hill about a mile above Bocay to work on a small, temporary dam called a weir. The Nicaraguans brought assault rifles, and Linder, too, came armed: in the matter of guns, he drew no distinction between his workmates and himself. Construction, not combat, was the idea, though. The weir would allow Linder to measure the flow of a mountain stream and help him identify the ideal site for a permanent concrete dam, whose waterfall would power the proposed new hydroelectric plant. Only, by climbing the hill he and his crew stumbled into one of the largest engagements of the Contra war.

Congress had voted a hundred million dollars for the Contras the year before, and by April of 1987 the Contra comandante, Enrique Bermúdez—known as 3-80, his number in military school—was using the money to move his headquarters to the border of Jinotega and launch a big push southward. The Contras began staging pinprick ambushes up and down the Bocay River. A little unit showed up on the hill where Linder and the crew were building the weir. Whatever happened next was over within minutes, and Benjamin Linder was dead and his body was stripped of his wallet, watch, camera, and cartridge belt. Two of his workers were dead at his side, and the four other members of his crew had fled down the hill to Bocay.

Linder's body was carried into the village, but the Sandinista officials there were nervous about having a dead American on their hands, and no one wanted to take charge. An American religious activist named Gary Hicks happened to be travelling through the region, and the Sandinistas put Hicks and a couple of other people on a helicopter with the corpse and sent them southward, out of the zone. Word of what had taken place arrived in Managua via the very shaky telephone connection to the electric utility. It was Rebecca Leaf who answered the phone.

Ben Linder had an uninhibited passion for the Sandinista revolution.

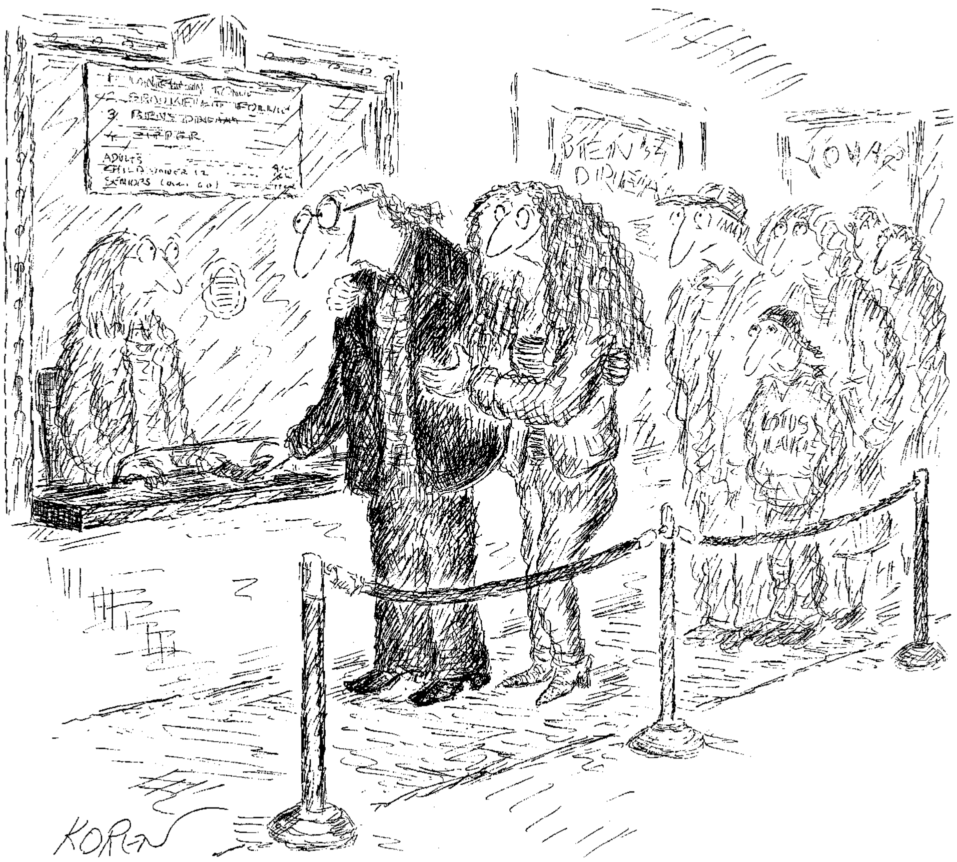


Rebecca Leaf in Bocay: Linder's death was the fateful element in her life.

TOP PHOTO: DAVID BLANKENHORN; BOTTOM PHOTO: BRUCE PETSCHEK/SEVEN GENERATIONS

IN the United States, Linder's death was a sensational news story. Ronald Reagan's Contra policy had been controversial to begin with, and here was an American citizen dead as a result of it—killed with bullets that had been paid for, presumably, by Congress. The uproar was loud enough that both the Contra command and the State Department were obliged to investigate and issue reports. An American official talked to the Contras who had participated in the incident, and the department summarized its conclusions in a letter that was sent to Linder's parents, in Oregon. Their son was killed, the letter said, because a Contra unit had ambushed a group of armed and uniformed Sandinistas, who were said to have included a Cuban and another foreigner—and one of those uniformed Sandinistas was Ben Linder. The Contras had called for the Sandinistas to surrender, but the Sandinistas had reached for their assault rifles and opened fire—and the Contras fired back.

The State Department's account was hard to believe, if only because the Contras were guerrillas—they called themselves commandos—and guerrillas do not normally wait to be fired on. Three American journalists made their way to the Contra camp, where top officers arranged interviews and the commandos repeated the official tale. But the commandos wore looks of terror on their faces, and the reporters came away filled with doubts. In Managua, Sandinista officials suggested that Linder had been shot point-blank—executed, in a word. A couple of Nicaraguan doctors examined the body and credited that possibility, and, on the basis of the Nicaraguan medical information and a blurry photograph, a couple of American forensic experts cautiously concurred. The most thorough of the American forensic reports dissented, with scathing remarks about the Nicaraguan autopsy report. Still, many people took the point-blank accusation quite seriously. The Sandinista officials suggested



"Two, please—one senior and one tootsie."

that Linder might have been tortured, too. And in Managua's Gringolandia the Americans who had known Linder or were supporters of his project listened to those claims and shook with rage.

The Gringolandia Americans felt betrayed by their own country—personally betrayed, not just politically. They felt grief-stricken and, at the same time, terrified. They felt that, with the killing outside Bocay, their own idealism and dedication had been put to the test, and if they were going to flee, the moment was now. But they were not going to flee. Ben Linder had stood his ground, and so would they. And in that frame of mind they had questions of their own: If Linder had been executed, who gave the order? Was it the Contra chiefs in Honduras? Or did the order come from a still higher authority—from United States advisers stationed in Honduras, the people who actually ran the Contra campaign? That was an angry question, and even now to some people it may seem a little paranoid. Then again, the agency that ran the Contras was the Central Intelligence Agency, and during the Contra war the C.I.A. did issue a fairly sinister manual to its Nicaraguan clients, extolling the virtues of assassination. (Under the heading "Selective Use of Violence for Propagandistic Effect," the C.I.A. manual said, "It is possible to neutralize carefully selected and planned targets, such as court judges.") Just this past spring, it was confirmed that in Guatemala the C.I.A. went on paying and protecting an agent who was responsible for covering up the Guatemalan Army's killing of an American innkeeper, Michael DeVine, in 1990. So who will say that the Gringolandia Americans were foolish or paranoid in their fear and rage?

Linder's funeral was held in the Nicaraguan coffee capital of Matagalpa, between Managua and Jinotega. Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista President, spoke. Linder's mother, father, brother, and sister flew in from the United States, and the American community came up from Managua, and the crowd stretched seven blocks through the Matagalpa streets. Afterward, a few of the Americans organized a memorial of their own. A group of seventy or eighty, some of them wearing clown suits and carrying guitars, rode up to El Cuá, and from there set out on foot, marching northward for two days along the dirt road straight into Contra country—all the way to the little village of Bocay.

The march was a theatrical gesture, with just enough of a Catholic-processional quality to give it a Nicaraguan accent. It was a gob of spit in the face of the Reagan Administration and its cowboy operatives in Central America. It was Gringolandia's call for help to the solidarity movement back in the United States. And the movement responded. The Linder family and their friends went on tour and raised money and spoke about the Sandinista People's Revolution and United States intervention, and for a good number of people across the country the name Benjamin Linder became a symbol of courage and principle.

THEN one of modern history's odder events took place. The fighting in 1987 was the climax of Nicaragua's war, and the Sandinista People's Army succeeded in pushing the main Contra forces back into Honduras. When George Bush took over the White House, early in 1989, he evidently decided that leaving the Sandinistas in power would pose no unbearable threat to America's security after all (which was precisely what Reagan's critics had always said), and the United States backed away from the Contra cause. The Sandinistas appeared to have won—and, in that circumstance, they agreed to hold a free election, if only to hammer a last nail in the Contra coffin. The Sandinistas thought of their revolution as part of a vast wave of revolutions across the whole of the Third World—as an irreversible fact of history—and this belief of theirs was echoed, without the Marxist theorizing, by any number of outside observers. The big American newspapers and television networks sponsored polls, and the pollsters reported a Sandinista landslide in the works. The Bush Administration made it clear that a freely elected Sandinista government would not find an enemy in the White House.

But when Election Day arrived—it

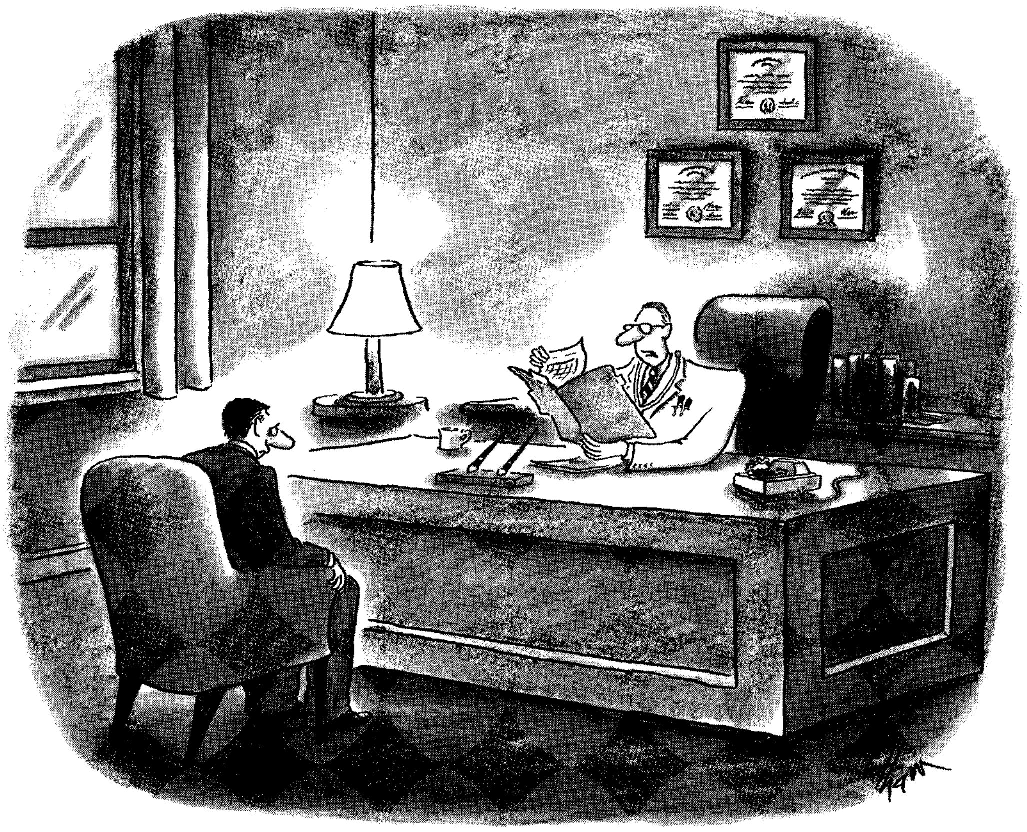
was February 25, 1990—the Nicaraguan people astounded the world by voting, in a clear majority, for the main civic opponent of the Sandinistas, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, and her allies. A majority in Managua and in most of the big towns voted against the Sandinista People's Revolution, and in the countryside an even bigger majority voted the same way. Even in the zones where the worst Contra atrocities had taken place, and where the Sandinista People's Army had fought with such tenacity to shield the peasants from terrorist attacks—even there, overwhelming majorities voted for Doña Violeta and for local candidates with a well-known hatred for the Sandinista National Liberation Front. In Linder's district in Jinotega, the people voted against the Sandinistas at a rate of nearly two to one. And in Nicaragua it was suddenly obvious that nothing was obvious.

The election revealed a considerable failure of American journalism. The political battles between right and left in the United States had been exceptionally bitter during the nineteen-eighties, and the war in Nicaragua had been a main point of contention. Yet how many journalists had spent more than a short time in the war zones, or had been able to make sense of what they saw? A brave and honorable few, certainly, but never enough to counter the ideologues on America's right and left. And to everyone who, for lack of better information, had accepted the Sandinistas as the champions of the people and the Contras as the widely hated mercenaries of a doomed imperialism, the election results were devastating.

The effect on Managua was instantly visible. Entire belief systems came unstuck, and for every doctrine or conviction that broke into pieces another hotel or restaurant emptied out. The tall and light-skinned foreigners who had looked so singular in a country of short and bronze-skinned people, the Americans who had sat in elegant Managua restaurants dressed in outlandish T-shirts and shorts, the women who had seemed casual and uncovered in a style that very few Nicaraguan women would have permitted themselves, the high-fashion Italian leftists, the sandal wearers (not for nothing did people joke about Sandalistas), the journalists, the internationalists, the poseurs, and the truly dedicated—all went home, except an occasional soul who had stumbled onto a business opportunity in Managua or had married into a Nicaraguan family. During the revolution and the war, enormous numbers of Nicaraguans had fled to Honduras, Costa Rica, and southern Florida, and those people, the exiles, now poured back into Managua to reclaim their old homes. Streets that had once been home for so many people from abroad took on their ancient Nicaraguan quality. Managua's new anti-Sandinista mayor painted over the stencilled slogans and the Mexican-style murals that had decorated walls around the city, and afterward it was hard to remember that such a place as Gringolandia had ever existed. And, with Gringolandia vanished, who could remember anymore that, like every street and block in every single Nicaraguan town, Gringolandia, too, had at one time produced a heartbreakingly valiant martyr?

STILL, some people insisted on remembering Benjamin Linder, and prominent among those people, much to her own surprise, was Joan Kruckewitt, the ABC Radio stringer. After the election, Joan watched the other Americans pack up and go home, and in time she did the same. She enrolled in graduate school at Stanford. She wanted a new life. Yet she had spent eight years in Nicaragua—it was the country of her twenties—and no matter how much she busied herself in California her old life kept trailing after her, like a vine caught on her heel. She and Larry, the news photographer, had broken up long ago. Larry had moved to Germany, and they barely stayed in touch. But it was not so easy to cut off their old housekeeper, Hortencia, back in Managua.

The housekeeper and her kids and their grandmother lived in a shack with a floor that had been put in only because of money from the gringo reporters. But without the gringos it was all too easy to picture the family scaveng-



"While it's not a cure, it does mean a guaranteed income for me."

ing for food in the city garbage dump, just like thousands of other destitute people. Joan came up with the idea of buying a freezer for storing soda bottles, in the hope of establishing Hortencia in a little grocery business. But installing the freezer blew out the lights in the entire shantytown, and when the electrical problems were solved Hortencia couldn't get her kids to stop drinking the sodas. So Joan committed herself to sending monthly remittances of two hundred dollars from California. Just to get the money delivered cost an extra twenty-four dollars a month. She worked temp jobs between classes to raise the cash. And she took on one further responsibility: she appointed herself the biographer of her old, once famous friend from the Managua class of '83.

Joan collected Linder's letters and interviewed his workmates, circus friends, and family, and after a while she began to write. During my own visits to Nicaragua in the nineteen-eighties, I never met Linder, and it is largely from Joan Kruckewitt's work in progress, "The Life and Death of Ben Linder," that I have drawn my impression of the man and my anecdotes about him. Yet for all her research there was one moment—his last, on the hill above Bocay, face to face with the Contras—that she could not describe with any precision. Interviewing the four workers who survived the attack on the dam was not much use: the men had fled as soon as the shooting broke out, and did not see what had happened to Linder. As for the Contras, no one had interviewed them except in the camp in Honduras, where the men could hardly have spoken frankly.

To find one of those commandos ought to have been possible. The official reports made after Linder's death identified the military unit as the Francisco Rodríguez Task Force and listed the names—or, at any rate, the noms de guerre—of the Contras involved in the incident: Raccoon, Williams, Wildcat, and several others, along with Bull's Eye, the regional commander. Some of those men had signed depositions as part of the Contra investigation, either by thumbprint or with a signature. Joan merely had to find out if any of those individuals were still alive, and go knock on the door.

But where was that door likely to be? She flew to Nicaragua and made her way up to Jinotega. It was not a comfortable trip. Even today, the Organization of American States estimates that ninety thousand land mines remain buried in Nicaraguan soil. Someone is always getting a foot blown off or getting killed by one of those mines. Still, she tramped around El Cuá, then went on to Bocay. She walked up and down the single street, introducing herself to the veterans of the Contra army and chatting about Nicaragua's multiple disasters and making wry observations.

Joan worried that the former Contras might suppose her to be on a mission of vengeance, on behalf of either the Sandinistas or the United States. The Linder family had filed a lawsuit against the Contra command, and the suit had not exactly prospered in the courts. Yet Joan also worried that some Contra officer might wish to see any new inquiries into Linder's death brought to a rapid end, and that in some isolated spot she might find herself facing a nervous peasant bearing a machete or a gun.

In the city of Jinotega, the provincial capital, Joan went to the home of Bull's Eye, who, it had been reported, was not present at the attack on Linder's weir but, as regional commander, did bear a responsibility for what had occurred. Bull's Eye received her alone in his bedroom, sprawled across the bed, with a motorcycle parked in a corner of the room and a pistol displayed in front of him, ostensibly because he was afraid of getting assassinated but maybe also for the little thrill of sexual threat. She had to kneel beside the bed to get her tape recorder within range of his face. Still, she learned that one of Bull's Eye's commandos from 1987 might be living not very far from Bocay, and she might be able to find him if she was willing to hike into the mountains. Which she was happy to do—she who had spent so many years tramping around Nicaragua for ABC Radio and had not flinched

NOVEMBER

Mack's insides still ached from the test
at the fancy new clinic. The pain bothered less, though,
than how he'd had to lie there like that—Lord!—rear up,
and even the nurses watching. Almost to home now,

he saw Riddle's herd, the lot of them lying down on the ground.
Everything pretty and sad: the Holsteins'
black and white that bold and true, and after a rain day or two
the grass—more than in summer—that green.

The mountainsides showed their trees shaved clean,
except for the dark of the oak and the beech leaves, over
 the river,
fog on the bald ridges awful, the white of ice. Already.
Not cancer.

He ought to be relieved, said the doctors.
They only found some little thumbs—a five-dollar word he forgot
the minute they named it—on the bowel wall.
Not uncommon, they called it. Like death, Mack thought.

He passed the school. Everyone up on the swings or on foot:
Tag. Football. Capture the Flag. The kids
still looked like October in all their bright clothes.
They raced as if windchased, fast as he drove. So this wasn't it.

Not the six dragged-out months that his young wife got,
and not a shock, either, like their one child Thelma's accident.
He was all right, but he'd die.
You know that the whole while, but then one day it's different,

like going by Fifth Mile Meadow and now there's a house built in it,
or a restaurant you dress up for where Joey Binder's mill was.
Mack determined not to get going on that. Not again.
He'd turn up his hill, check his mailbox,

maybe come back and *fix* the foolish mailbox,
about to lie down on its side. He'd check in on his tiny string
of heifers. Instead he held steady, north.
Watson claimed he'd got out of dairy for good, just barbering

full time in his little shop in the yellow frame building
across from the feed store: it hadn't changed much, if at all.
"Say that for the rest," Mack whispered. "Say that."
And their talk hadn't changed. Animals, crops. But before Watson could pull

the paper ring from around his neck, Mack spoke: "Well,
I'll have a shave." How did it happen? It felt like dreaming.
"Yes, I guess I'll have a shave," he decided.
And then, the cloth on his face steaming

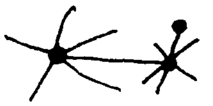
while his friend gripped the ivory handle in his big fingers, stropping
the blade on dirt-dark leather, Mack said,
through the fog, "I haven't had this done in years. Years."
But it felt good. Lord, it did feel good!

—SYDNEY LEA

from any assignment. Joan Kruckewitt was not easily intimidated. But—this much she concluded from the session with Bull's Eye and his gun and his bed—she did think that any further chasing after Linder's killers ought to be done in company, not alone.

So it was back to California, where she set out to recruit a colleague from among the old crew of Nicaragua reporters. Her call came to me. During the war, I had reported on the fighting in Nicaragua's eastern zone, but I had always been reluctant to wander into the northern mountains, where the worst of the fighting had taken place (and in that way I made my own contribution to the general American ignorance about rural Nicaragua). I did think I ought to see what my readers had missed. Besides, I was curious about Linder.

I never doubted that he was a bit fanatical. The gun that he was known to carry did not endear him to me. Even so, I attributed a rare kind of American idealism to him. I imagined that he must have been something like Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, the Northern martyrs of the Southern civil-rights movement in the United States, back in the nineteen-sixties. Only, Linder had come from the eighties generation, and he was killed in a place that was farther, much farther, from home, under circumstances that— But no one has known exactly what the circumstances were. And so Joan's idea of going into the hills around Bocay appealed to me, and I agreed to go along. I even rushed ahead and made a couple of exploratory trips of my own into the north, just to see what kind of world Linder had known in his last days, and what had happened in the years since.



THE first place I visited was a mountain called El Chipote, near the cowboy town of Quilalí, about forty miles west of Bocay. I climbed the slope with a party of Americans, Nicaraguans, Argentines, and mules, under the escort of young men wearing blue uniforms and bearing AK-47s. These men were the police department of Quilalí, or, alternatively, the armed following of the Talavera clan, whose turf this was. The Talaveras are a notable family—an embodiment of every rural Nicaraguan event that never did get adequately reported to the outside world in the years following the Sandinista revolution. And at the head of our expedition were two members of the family itself, Salvador Talavera and his younger brother, who was known as Little Jackal.

Salvador made a lively guide. He was tall for a Nicaraguan, and he looked comfortable with his gold jewelry, shiny black military boots, oversized pistol, and automatic rifle. He enjoyed pointing out the historical sites. In the nineteen-twenties and thirties, the United States Marines had occupied Nicaragua, and the northern peasants rose up against them in a rebellion led by General Augusto César Sandino. The Marines chased Sandino all over the countryside, but he kept escaping, with his peasant army, to the slopes of El Chipote. Salvador pointed out the hillside where Sandino had made camp, and the two Talavera brothers posed for photographs in front of it, smiling with patriotic satisfaction. Then we hiked down from the peak through a stretch of jungle, where howling monkeys roared from the treetops and pelted us with excrement. In northern Nicaragua, the people resist the foreigners, and the monkeys resist the people.

The Marines never did track Sandino down, and after a while they gave up and went home, leaving the struggle in the hands of General Anastasio Somoza and the National Guard. Sandino and Somoza made peace, and Sandino set out to convert his rebel army into a model farm coöperative, halfway between El Chipote and Bocay. His idea was to spread science and prosperity through the northern hills. But Somoza lured Sandino down to Managua and had him murdered, and, with Sandino's rebellion out of the way, the Somoza family established a dictatorship that lasted for decades.

In the nineteen-sixties, a handful of Marxists from the university resurrected

Sandino's name, organized the Sandinista National Liberation Front, and launched a guerrilla insurgency. The launch was shaky. By the mid-nineteen-seventies, there were only a couple of hundred Sandinista fighters, and the likelihood of every last guerrilla getting wiped out seemed vastly greater than the chance of overthrowing the Somoza dictatorship. Still, as Salvador explained to me in great detail—the conversation lasted several days—in 1977 three of the older Talavera brothers decided to join the guerrilla army. They enlisted in a vaguely Maoist Sandinista faction that was led by Tomás Borge, one of the founders of the Sandinista Front.

There were nine brothers and five sisters in the Talavera family, and in those days they were contentedly prosperous. The father owned three ranches and several hundred head of cattle, and the mother owned a store. Joining the guerrillas must have seemed a quixotic thing to do, but in 1979 the National Guard collapsed and the Somoza dictatorship did get overthrown, and the Sandinista Front amazed the world, and even its own members, by marching into Managua. Tomás Borge became the new Minister of the Interior—which is to say he ran the secret police.

The Talaveras were not so lucky, though. Of the brothers who had fought in the Sandinista ranks, the one known as the Jackal came through the war in one piece, but the two others were killed in the last battles against the National Guard. In recognition of the family's sacrifices, the new revolutionary government bestowed a scholarship on young Salvador, the martyred heroes' little brother. Off he went, a schoolboy from the northern hills, to study agriculture and Marxism in Cuba—the only free country in the Americas, as he imagined it. Yet no sooner was he gone than a fateful argument broke out—the most fateful argument of all for the Nicaraguan revolution. It was about farm policy.

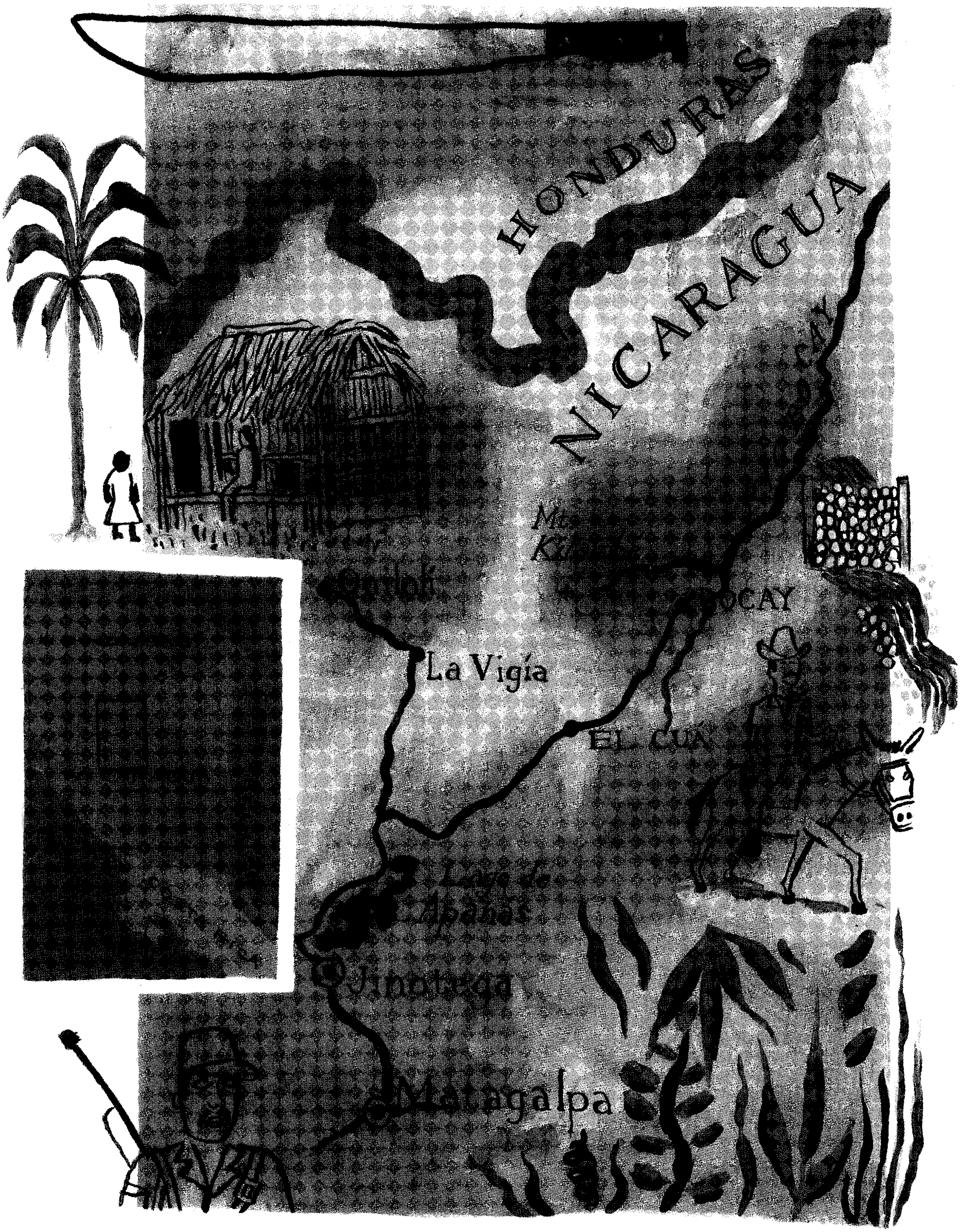
THE Sandinista leaders who came to power in 1979 were well-educated city people, by and large, and when people like that tried to imagine Nicaragua's farm country they pictured a Marxist cartoon: the dictator and his cronies from the old oligarchy owning perhaps half the land, a few other landlords owning additional vast tracts, and the great majority of the rural people landless and oppressed. The Sandinistas thought that by nationalizing the oligarchy's land they could set Nicaragua on the agrarian path that had been blazed by such countries as Communist Bulgaria, whose rural successes were held in high regard. And so they expropriated the Somoza-family lands and those of a few Somoza cronies. In rural Nicaragua, people thought that was wonderful.

But the idea of eventually moving toward a fully nationalized agriculture was implicit in everything the Sandinistas did, and that idea did not go down well in the countryside. Landownership in reality was not nearly so lopsided as the Sandinistas had imagined. The Somozas and their cronies owned perhaps a fifth of the farmland (instead of a half). The rest of the land was a crazy quilt of farms of every size, from enormous tracts to the tiniest patches, where large numbers of the extremely poor grew beans and rice. The people who owned land, rich and poor, did not look forward to losing it. A few people grumbled about the Sandinista goals, and the Sandinistas responded by hauling the grumblers before the new revolutionary tribunals and confiscating their farms, big and small alike—which established the point that, under the new Sandinista system, anybody at all, not just the old Somoza oligarchy, might lose his land.

The Sandinistas insisted on controlling farm prices. They set up state agencies for buying and selling, and obliged everyone to do business with the new agencies. Women from the poorest families balanced *canastas* filled with fruit or grains on their heads and went to market, exactly as they always had, and the Sandinista police raided the rural buses and arrested the women as speculators. And the farmers and peasants began to panic. They felt that they were losing control over their products, their freedom of action, and their land. To the farmers and peasants, land was their identity, not just a means of livelihood. The smaller the patch, the more fiercely they clung to it. The argument about property was complicated by cultural differences between the city Sandinistas and the rural people. The Sandinista leaders tended to be atheists or followers of the left-wing Catholicism called liberation theology. The rural people tended to be traditional Catholics or, like the Talavera family, converts to one of the new Protestant and evangelical sects. The Sandinistas from the city were nationalists. The country people—in the north and on the Atlantic Coast, especially—were loyal to their own enormous clans and to their own provinces. To the very poorest people from the remotest zones, Managua seemed not much closer than Chicago, and the Sandinistas themselves, with their urban accents, were virtually foreigners.

Then the Sandinistas committed a colossal error. They introduced some genuine foreigners into the countryside. These were Cubans. They arrived in the first months of the revolution to supervise the conversion of the old Sandinista guerrilla army into a conventional military force and to dispense advice. Almost instantly, a blazing hatred for the Cubans—known as Russians to the people who despised them—swept through the northern and eastern countryside. The people began to feel that, like Sandino in the past, they had been tricked by sweet talkers from the cities. And they came to a horrifying conclusion: that the Sandinista National Liberation Front was a political movement with a nearly demonic ability to deceive and manipulate; a movement that was devoted to contempt of God and theft of land; a movement that called itself Nicaraguan but was actively trying to turn the country over to foreigners; a movement that claimed to be for the peasants and the poor but was actually their most implacable enemy.

An uprising broke out—a tiny, militarily insignificant event, except for what it portended. It occurred in 1980, at a moment so early in the Sandinista People's Revolution that the United States, under Jimmy Carter, was still sending aid, in the hope of keeping the Sandinistas from slipping into the Soviet orbit. The rebels were Quilalí country people who, like their neighbors the Talaveras, had fought on the Sandinista side—against the National Guard. A


HONDURAS
NICARAGUA
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Quilalí
La Vigía
OCAY
EL CUÁ
Lago de Apanás
Jinotega
Matagalpa

Former National Guards, operating out of Honduras with American backing, ran the Contras in the northern countryside near the villages of El Cuá and Bocay, where Linder was building his power plants.

second armed movement got started—this time in southern Jinotega, a few miles away. It was led by still another peasant who had begun by fighting on the Sandinista side. The Sandinistas confiscated a farm belonging to Bull's Eye—the man who, a few years later, would be regional commander of the Contra patrol that killed Linder—and he, too, joined the rebellion. So did a cousin of his with the nom de guerre Franklyn, and twenty-eight other members of the Galeano clan. Within a year or two of the Sandinista People's Revolution, some twenty armed groups were running around the countryside, most of them in the north, others in the Indian zones to the east, where regionalist sentiments were strong.

THOSE early anti-Sandinista uprisings were fairly peculiar, especially in the north. The isolation of Nicaragua's mountain zones and the helplessness of the very poor people generate outsized personalities—warlords with grandiose ideas and brutal customs. The people who organized armed groups were intoxicated by the vastness of their power. But groups like that had no way to unite, no way to communicate with the outside world, and no way to maintain discipline among themselves. Militarily, they were doomed even before they began. To have any success at all, they would need leaders whose knowledge of war and organization went beyond anything that could be learned in a peasant village. But where to find people with that sort of experience and education?

Nearby, as it happened. The surviving officers of Somoza's National Guard, having fled the country after their defeat, in 1979, had set up camp across the border in Honduras. They kept an eye on the anti-Sandinista insurgents, and when the time was right offered to be the new leaders. A wilder proposal is hard to imagine. Only a year or two earlier, during the war between the Somoza dictatorship and the Sandinista guerrillas, those same guardsmen had committed all kinds of violent crimes against the peasants, and in the months after their defeat, ensconced in their Honduran camps, they had continued committing crimes.

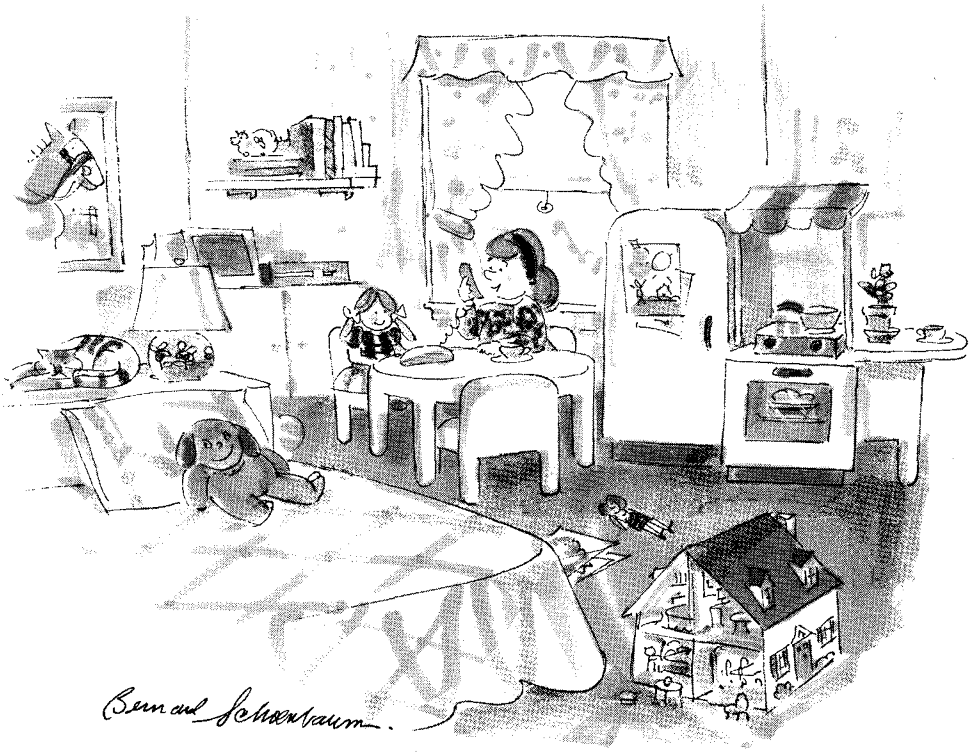
The officers of what had been the National Guard were murderers and rapists by nature—true psychopaths, in several cases. They surrounded their camps with secret cemeteries containing the bodies of their own soldiers, whom they had murdered for one reason or another. (The journalist Sam Dillon, in his book about the Contras, describes a hillside where the cadavers were sticking out of the ground.) Yet the former guardsmen had a genuine knowledge of the rudiments of military science. They enjoyed a staggering amount of foreign backing, too—at first, from the right-wing military dictatorship in Argentina (eager to battle the Sandinistas because the Sandinistas were supporting Argentina's left-wing guerrillas), and, later, from the Reagan Administration (eager to bring America's worldwide struggle against the Soviet Union into the Central American jungle). With allies as powerful as that, the offer to lead the rebellion began to look strangely reasonable. And, because the greatest single emotion in the northern countryside was fear of the Sandinistas, farm boys kept slipping away into the jungle or trekking across the border into Honduras and taking their places in the new anti-Sandinista army, which at first called itself the September 15th Legion, then the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, and then the Nicaraguan Resistance (which is the name that everyone uses in Nicaragua today), but was always known outside Nicaragua and sometimes inside it as the Contras.

That was how things stood in December of 1982, when Salvador Talavera returned home from Cuba. The Sandinistas had always treated the Talaveras with respect. The family had nothing to complain about, personally. None of their lands had been confiscated. Salvador's oldest brother, Félix, had become mayor of Quilalí, and his younger brother, Little Jackal, had joined the Sandinista People's Army. Salvador himself was an earnest young Marxist. Yet the family was not immune to local opinion. Their own dearest friends were joining the uprising against the Sandinistas. And the Talaveras, too, began to defect. One of the younger brothers, Luis Noel, went to Little Jackal with seventeen friends to explain that the entire group was about to join the Contras, and what did Little Jackal propose to do?

Little Jackal joined the group. Next, the Jackal went over—the Talaveras' surviving hero of the Sandinista guerrilla war against the National Guard. Salvador wandered around, talking to the country people to see what everyone was saying. And he, too, the graduate of a Cuban school, with a proper Marxist training—yes, but a family man first—made the only possible decision and went the way of his brothers. A traitor to the Sandinistas—after so much privilege had been lavished on

WALK
CHEW GUM
WALK

him! But—such was his reasoning—not a traitor to the family, or to the northern region, or to the farmers and peasants.



"Hello. May I speak to my broker, please?"

COULD the Sandinistas have prevented those defections? The Sandinista leaders are wiser today, and many of them look back on their own rural program and wonder at their folly. A small literature of shrewd and rueful Sandinista reflections has been written during the nineteen-nineties, and the accounting of Sandinista errors there—Bulgaria, Cubans, Christianity, authoritarianism, and city-farm relations, plus a few additional strictures about the Sandinista fondness for a single-party state—is quite damning. But during the early revolutionary years the Sandinistas had a hard time viewing themselves with any clarity. They saw their own sufferings, the popularity that had once been theirs, and the machinations of the United States imperialists. They saw the good works they were doing: the projects like Linder's, the education campaigns, the health clinics, the sanitation efforts, the technical farm aid (most of it paid for by the Soviet Union, which was fraternally munificent after the revolution's first years). And they never doubted that they were the leaders and the champions of Nicaragua's poor and oppressed population.

By the time the Sandinistas took a second look, it was already 1985. They did try to reverse some of their most widely hated policies, if only as a tactical maneuver. Instead of building up the state farms, they began handing out land to the poor peasants—a lot of it, after a while. They eased the price restrictions. But the killings and the hatreds had gone out of control by then, and the United States was fanning the flames, and the Sandinistas were afraid of making too many concessions to their enemies. So they went on expropriating the farms of their political opponents, which undid any popularity they might otherwise have achieved.

Merely to maintain their military advantage, the Sandinistas had to round up young men for the draft—which made the Sandinista Front the enemy not only of God and morality but of family unity as well. In regions where the Contras were strong, the Sandinistas felt obliged by military necessity to relocate entire populations into special controlled zones, and as many as two hundred thousand peasants were pushed off the land. The Sandinista People's Army committed a number of atrocities, too, even if news of those events did not spread as easily as news of atrocities by the Contras. In Jinotega, the Sandinistas, too, had secret cemeteries.

Whole communities fled in the face of the terror. One day in the north, I met an elderly evangelical preacher, an admirer of General Sandino and an acquaintance of Sandino's family, who told me (hopping off his horse for the pleasure of a chat) that he and another preacher had led their two congregations, seventy-five families in all, on foot and horseback for twelve days out of Sandinista Nicaragua to the Promised Land of Honduras, where they could put themselves under the protection, such as it was, of the Contra army.

The Talaveras likewise had reason to flee. The next brother to be killed, after the two who had died fighting for the Sandinistas, was Luis Noel, who died fighting for the Contras. The Jackal lost his leg to a mine. Then the father of all those brothers was killed by a mine that blew up a bus—for which the Sandinistas blamed the Contras, and the Contras blamed the Sandinistas. And what was left of the Talavera family fled across the border and joined the half million Nicaraguans (a seventh of the entire nation) in exile. Some of the Talaveras went to Honduras, others to Florida. Salvador and his mother and two sisters ended up in Canada, and waited there until the fall of the Sandinistas. That was the meaning of the revolution and the war for the country people—a calamity beyond reckoning, probably the worst thing that had happened to those regions since the Spanish Conquest.

WHAT could the killing of Benjamin Linder mean to people who had gone through such experiences? I mentioned Linder to Salvador Talavera, and he searched his memory for 1987—the year that the Jackal lost his leg. Linder's name didn't register. Still, Salvador could understand why, as Linder's countryman, I was interested in the affair.

One of the Talavera family's supporters in Quilalí was an austere old veteran, whose service in the war against the Sandinistas dated back to the earliest rebellions, and in his estimation going into the Bocay region was a risky proposition, best done briskly. Salvador was not so worried. To drive up to Bocay and ask around seemed to him perfectly possible. He just thought that if I was going to wander around the north without my own blue-uniformed escort bearing an AK-47 I ought to know something about the present difficulties in the zone that had once been Linder's. It was not as if the horrors of the war had disappeared just because of a very surprising election back in 1990.

Violeta Chamorro won her victory, and right away asked the Contras to disband and disarm. By then, Bull's Eye's cousin Franklyn had taken 3-80's place as top commander, and he and the other officers acceded to her request. They felt that they had won the war against the Sandinistas—even if success had come about through an election. The Contras gathered at mass ceremonies to disband their army, and the number of men, and a few women, in arms turned out to be twenty thousand, not counting a couple of thousand still in exile—a far larger number than even the Sandinistas had imagined. In whole regions of backcountry Nicaragua—in the rural districts of Jinotega, Nueva Segovia, Matagalpa, Chontales, Boaco, and Madriz, along the Atlantic Coast, and in a few areas by the Costa Rican border—the Contras' popularity was overwhelming.

The claim that they had become the largest guerrilla movement in the modern history of Latin America was entirely correct. With the size of their army and its popularity displayed for all the world to see, the Contras convinced themselves that now, at last, Nicaragua was going to enjoy a government sympathetic to the peasants. Doña Violeta made wonderful promises, and the Contras believed her. They handed over their guns (except for a few, which they buried—just in case) and they went back to their villages and they awaited the benefits of victory.

The problems that Doña Violeta faced were daunting, though, and the biggest of them was the Sandinista Front. The Sandinistas had held the election only because they were certain that they would win, and they had turned over the Presidency to Doña Violeta only because, politically, they had no alternative. But they never intended to let the full power of the state slip from their hands. The Sandinistas controlled the Army and the police, and Doña Violeta herself was a person of no great strength. And so she agreed to a compromise, on the gamble that, with time and maturity, the Sandinistas would come to accept a democratic system. By the terms of the compromise, she remained the President, and the Sandinistas remained in charge of the armed forces. Even the name of the Army—the Sandinista People's Army—remained unchanged. Daniel Ortega's brother, Humberto, stayed on as commander.

In the cities and in the rich Pacific Coast farm country, Doña Violeta's gamble worked out well enough—even if improvements in the economy were minuscule and took four or five years to occur. A few benefits of peace and compromise even fell on the north. Doña Violeta's new government built some rural schoolhouses, and she kept up the land distribution that had begun in the later years of the Sandinista People's Revolution. More Nicaraguans ended up owning land under her Presidency than at any time in the past, which was wonderful, in principle—even if the land went to the Contras at a painfully slow rate, and some of them got nothing at all. Still, the peasants were the big losers. There was never enough money to hire teachers for the new schoolhouses, and never enough money to provide seed and technical support for the newly distributed farms.

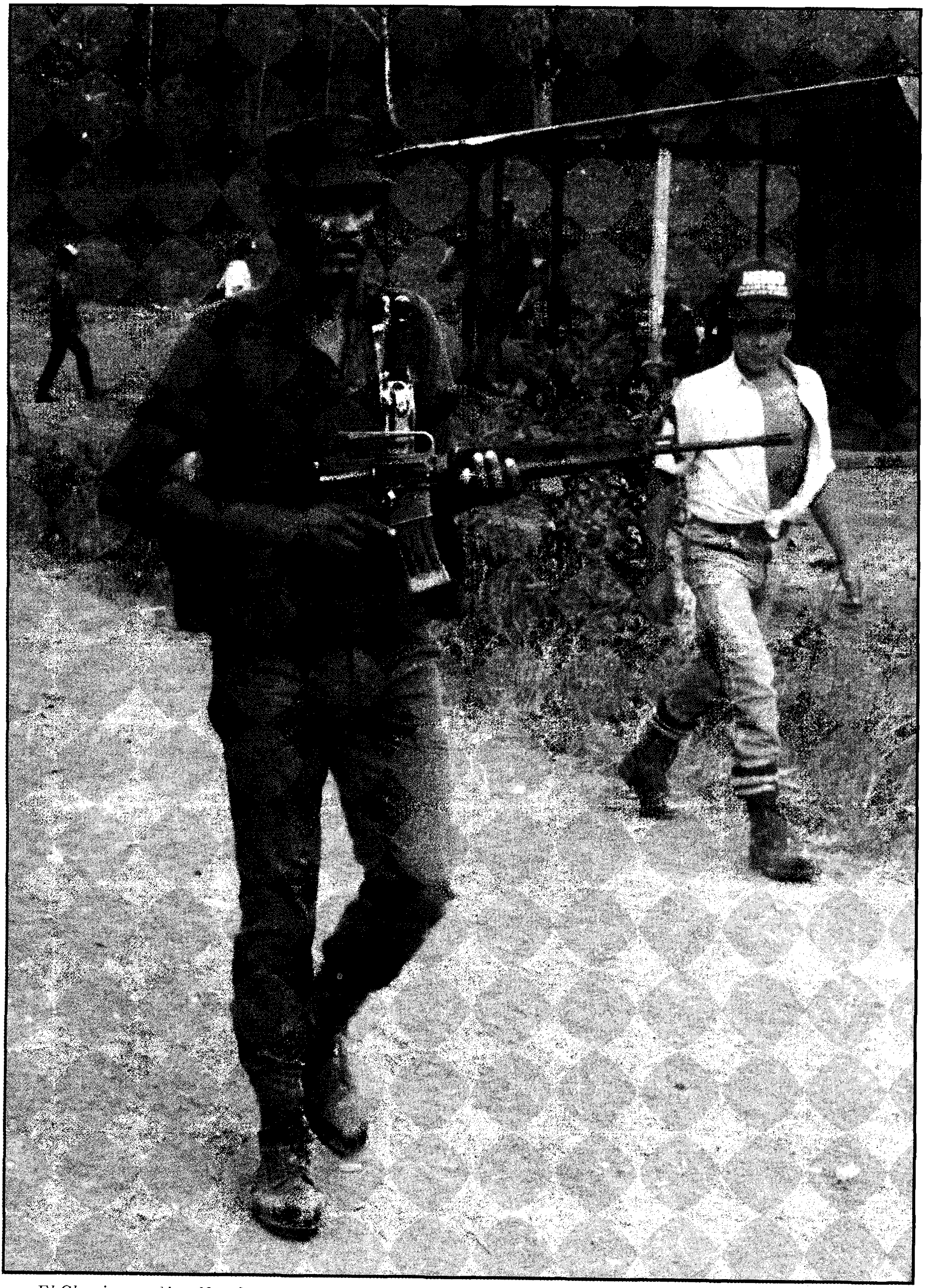
After the many years of Sandinista expropriations, there was no way to straighten out the problem of who owned which farm. A large portion of the farmland—as much as forty per cent (though Nicaraguan statistics have never meant very much)—remained in dispute. No one wanted to invest in the countryside in circumstances like that, with the result that more people had land, and more of them were destitute. The average Nicaraguan ended up four times as poor as the average person even in El Salvador. But worse than poverty and chaos was a wave of murders and mysterious deaths in the backcountry. People were killed over personal grudges, over land, and, above all, over politics. A large number of Sandinistas—more than a hundred and fifty—were killed. But most of the victims were Contras. Some of them were assassinated outright, others died in murky circumstances. Several of the victims were people whose training within the Contra army might have allowed them to become political leaders in the countryside, which was exactly what the peasants had never had and always needed. There was Franklyn, for instance. He died in a car crash. The most dramatic death took place in the heart of Managua. In February, 1991, Enrique Bermúdez, 3-80 himself, was assassinated in the parking lot of the Hotel Intercontinental, a few hundred yards from the headquarters of the Sandinista People's Army. Though the Sandinista People's Army and the police began to claim, ever more insistently as time passed, that they had become professional organizations and no longer took orders from the Sandinista Front—though the Army gave up the Sandinista name (just last year), and though Humberto Ortega finally did step down—no progress at all was made in solving Bermúdez's murder or that of any of the other important Contras. The demobilized commandos became convinced that death squads were at work. And the consequences were predictable.

A NEW series of peasant uprisings, the "re-Contra" movement—a humorous name, as in "refried" beans—got under way. The very first of the battles, re-Contras versus the Sandinista People's Army, took place outside Bocay in 1991. Four years had passed since Linder's death, and Bocay was still the hottest place in the oven.

Most of the rebels wanted government benefits and nothing else, and either the Sandinista People's Army hunted them down or Doña Violeta's government bought off the leaders with money and jobs. Some former Sandinista soldiers, living in rural poverty, staged similar uprisings, and those rebellions were likewise brought to an end.

But one of the re-Contra uprisings proved to be a lot tougher. Salvador described it to me at length, speaking in an oddly shifting tone—now exhilarated by his memories, now barely containing the nervousness and fear that those

RAOUL SHADE



El Charrito saw himself as the government of northern Nicaragua, free to conduct as many executions as suited his taste.

"Hey! Great shoes!"

• •

memories called up. The Talaveras had been among the large number of exiles who returned home following the election, imagining that victory was theirs. Someone took a shot at Little Jackal, though without hitting him, and someone else sprayed bullets at Salvador's house. A Sandinista mob attacked the Jackal's farm. The oldest of the brothers, Félix, the one who had been mayor of Quilalí, was shot to death in a park in his own town under somewhat murky circumstances. But, by the time of Félix's death, the Talaveras had already made their decision, and they, too, launched a re-Contra insurgency.

They called themselves the Comandante 3-80 Northern Front, in a salute to their murdered leader, and they attracted the support of a couple of hundred other re-Contras and several hundred noncombatants, and the friendly backing of any number of peasant families in the north. The Jackal, one-legged though he was, served as commander. Salvador mounted a political operation on behalf of the 3-80 Northern Front and established contact with right-wing Cuban organizations in Miami (putting his Cuban education to use after all).

The re-Contras of the 3-80 Northern Front attacked Sandinista trucks and Sandinista People's Army units. They blew up electric and telephone lines. Some of the 3-80 re-Contras killed a number of Sandinista peasants, too, for no good reason. Doña Violeta and the Sandinista People's Army had every motive for bringing the fighting to an end, and in August, 1993, a delegation of government officials and high officers from the Sandinista People's Army came by helicopter to Quilalí for talks with the 3-80 Northern Front. But Salvador was suspicious about the intentions of the delegation: there were no church hierarchs and no one he considered to be a neutral observer—only the enemies of the 3-80 Northern Front, who could go back on their word any time they felt like it. Salvador expressed his doubts to his brothers, and they, too, became suspicious, and when the government and Army delegates entered a schoolhouse to begin the talks Salvador stood up to address the delegation. He said, "The 3-80 Front is ready—" and then he and his team of re-Contra negotiators pulled guns from their shirts and took the delegation hostage.

Salvador shook with tension as he recalled this event to me. It must have been the most terrifying moment of his life. He was proud of it, though. He invited me to his home, where his wife pulled out an elegant photo album of his deeds for me to admire. But no one could say that kidnapping the peace negotiators did much for peace. In Managua, a group of former Sandinista Army officers staged a retaliatory kidnapping of anti-Sandinista politicians, and humiliated the politicians by parading them around in their underwear. The country seemed to be on the brink of a general breakdown. The Catholic Church had to step in to bring the hostage-taking to an end.

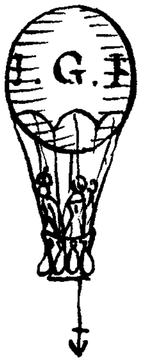
The final battle between the Talavera brothers' 3-80 Northern Front and the Sandinista People's Army took place during four days in February of 1994 in the area around El Chipote mountain—on the site where, long ago, General Sandino had stood off the Marines. It was a battle, in effect, over symbolic ownership of Sandino's heritage. For who were Sandino's truest heirs—the city Marxists who invoked his name or the country people of the region where Sandino had fought his war? A few men were killed on both sides. Little Jackal was nearly killed. But to drive the Talavera family and its supporters out of the mountains was not really possible. If the people in Nicaragua's northern mountains want to keep on fighting, the greatest army in the world cannot make them stop.

The fighting around El Chipote was the last major combat of the Contra war. It is remarkable that outside Nicaragua hardly anything about it was reported. In those early weeks and months of 1994, the world's attention was focussed on the Zapatista National Liberation Army, in Chiapas, Mexico, which was staging an uprising of its own. Yet the uprising of the 3-80 Northern Front was a lot stronger, militarily, because of modern weapons and the training that some of those rebels had received, back during the Reagan Administration, at United States Army bases. Nicaragua's 3-80 Northern Front and Mexico's Zapatistas had the same aims, more or less: land and human rights for the peasants of the backwoods, and down with the corrupt and hateful rulers in the capital! Salvador Talavera confessed to me a lurking sympathy for the Zapatistas, though he didn't want to make a fuss about it. The difference between the uprisings was that in Mexico the Zapatistas were led by a clever philosophy professor, Subcomandante Marcos, who knew how to speak in a style full of baroque seductions for a certain kind of intellectual. But there were no professors in Nicaragua's 3-80 Northern Front and no elaborate doctrines to bathe the uprising in a golden light—just guns and farmers burning with hatred and fear, and, after a while, the dead on both sides.

A PEACE agreement was put into place a few months after the fighting at El Chipote, and through one of its stipulations members of the 3-80 Northern Front entered the police force in Bocay and a number of other towns and villages around the north. But the crucial part of the agreement was a promise of economic support from the United States and the European Union. The Talavera brothers and their supporters decided to use that support to pursue the dream that had been General Sandino's—a farm coöperative in the north, to serve as a home for the rebel soldiers and to spread advanced agricultural techniques. The 3-80 Coöperative was in the hills around El Chipote. The Jackal was president, and Little Jackal was treasurer. The ordinary co-op members were the rank and file of the 3-80 Northern Front and their families—people without even a decent roof to call their own. I toured the place. It was a series of nine parcels, and was one of the most dismal sites I have ever seen, not just because of the extreme poverty of most of the people.

For what had the Contra war been about, finally? The Sandinistas had wanted to do something on behalf of the poor country people. And the Contras—anyway, the Talaveras' wing of the Contra movement—had wanted the same and had even organized a coöperative: a socialist idea, bearing the name of Comandante 3-80. At its deepest levels, the gap between the Sandinistas and the country people who fought against them was not very great. It was just that Sandinista notions of how to modernize the countryside had been distorted by a number of Communist fantasies and by a certain arrogance of city people in the face of peasants, which had caused the Sandinistas to push ahead with their calamitous ideas, and then the Cold War rivalries of the United States and the Soviet bloc had flooded the country with good weapons and bad advice.

The Talaveras and most of the other re-Contras settled down, but one of their comrades from the 3-80 Northern Front, a strange character known as El Charrito—a name meaning, roughly, the Dandy, in the style of a mariachi singer—looked on any peace at all as treason to the anti-Sandinista cause. El Charrito set up a splinter army of his own, which he likewise called the 3-80 Northern Front. And on went the war, mosquito-style. The Talavera brothers viewed El Charrito as a lunatic without a political program. But he did have a program. It was to go on fighting against the Sandinistas forever. Also to mount attacks on the traitors from the original 3-80 Northern Front, who had agreed to lay down their arms. Also to kill thieves, or people that El Charrito took to be thieves. In short, to do as he pleased. El Charrito's lunacy was in the mountain tradition. He saw himself as virtually the new government of northern Nicaragua, free to conduct as many executions as suited his taste.



At his side stood a dozen or so other re-Contra groups, led by men with names like Wolf and Devil. There were re-Contras like Pedrito—who would become the most prominent of the rebels after El Charrito was finally tracked down and killed, this past June. Plus there were rural bandits who dispensed with political justifications altogether and devoted themselves to kidnapping, extortion, cattle rustling, robbery, and preying on the coffee harvest—some four hundred souls in all, though estimates go as high as a thousand. A lot of fighting was going on—nothing on the scale of the Battle of El Chipote, but more than the Nicaraguan government or the American Embassy or most of the press or anyone else in Managua wanted to admit. In the regions that had once been Linder's, the combats were weekly. And there were kidnappings. Last year, for instance, El Charrito kidnapped an American.

The victim happened to be Gary Hicks—the religious activist who, back in 1987, had accompanied Benjamin Linder's corpse on the helicopter ride south from Bocay. Getting Hicks released was complicated, for who was going to negotiate with El Charrito? The Organization of American States maintains a peacekeeper's mission in Nicaragua called the International Commission for Support and Verification, whose business is to talk to the peasants and hold public meetings and try to bring a little calm and rationality to the situation. Some people thought that the O.A.S. staff people were biased against the Sandinistas, and maybe sometimes they were. But they had avoided antagonizing the re-Contras, and that was a great achievement. No one was staging armed attacks against the O.A.S.'s white jeeps. The O.A.S. staff people were the only group in the north who stood for anything resembling law and honesty. And they succeeded in getting Hicks released.

IN Managua, I heard that the O.A.S. was planning to send a convoy up to Bocay, and though I had always intended to go with Joan Kruckewitt, hitching a ride in one of those white jeeps was too good an opportunity to pass up. The convoy laid over in the city of Jinotega, where the O.A.S. had a branch office, and there, at dinner, I heard the first bit of news about Benjamin Linder. The O.A.S.'s Jinotega staffers, some of them, were earnest ex-Contras, working now as peace negotiators. When I mentioned Linder's name, they knew exactly whom I meant. He was the North American from the nineteen-eighties, right? The guy on the unicycle? He was a humanitarian, even if he did side with the Sandinistas—that was how they remembered him. One of the O.A.S. staff mused, "Benjamin Linder—his widow is still living in the area."

"His widow!" I said. "He didn't have a wife."

They insisted. "There is a widow Linder. She is a gringa, and she lives in El Cuá."

The jeep convoy reached El Cuá the next afternoon. I learned that the widow Linder rented a room in one of the village's two-story buildings but spent most of her time in Bocay. We continued northward.

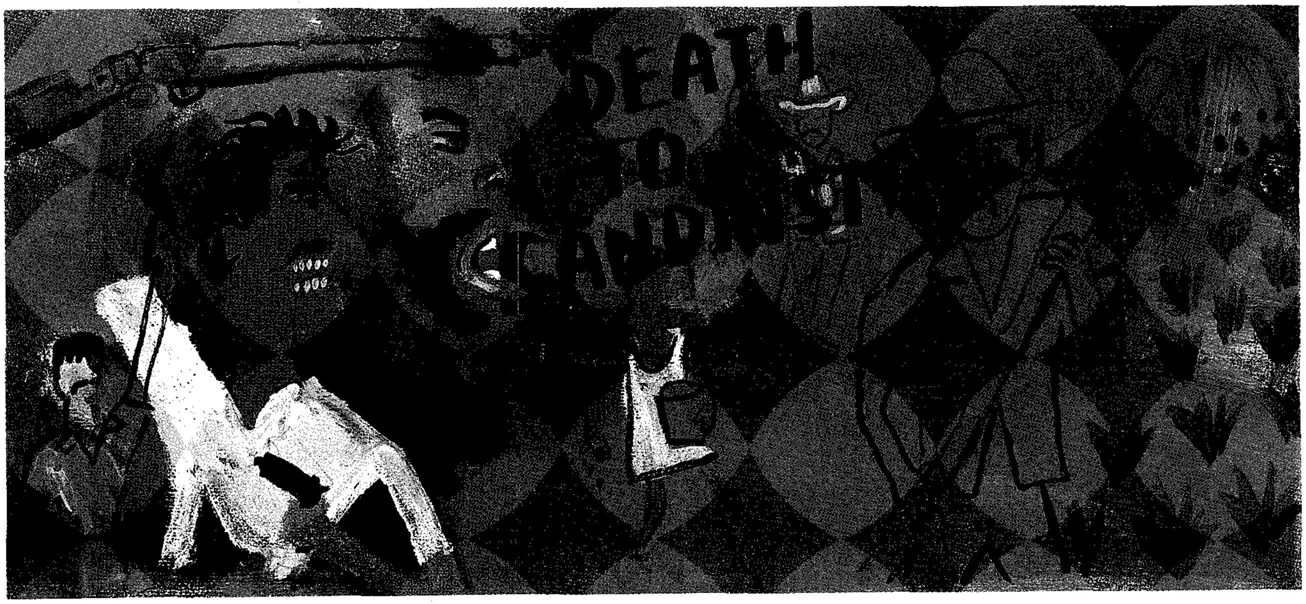
Those northern roads are no less bizarre than some of the peasant rebels. Above the city of Jinotega, the highways are unpaved, and the sides drop away into sheer cliffs, and you gaze out onto slopes that seem completely impassable and wild, only to discover, as your eyes recover their focus, that here is a man leading an ox down a trail that appears to be vertical, and somewhere else is a little boy riding a mule, and the absurd drop-aways and sheer rock faces are aswarm with people, as in a Chinese landscape painting. Our convoy forded the Bocay River more than a dozen times, and the water lapped at the running boards of the jeeps. Finally, there was one mountain twist too many, and I had the indignity of halting a peacekeeping mission of the Organization of American States to allow me to stand on the side of the road and settle my stomach.

In Bocay, I climbed down from the jeep and let the convoy push on still farther to the north. I wandered around, chatting with storekeepers, and discovered a political situation that was scarcely to be believed. Bocay and El Cuá are considered a single municipality for jurisdictional purposes, even if it takes two days to walk from one village to the other. In the election of 1990, the two places had voted jointly for a single mayor and municipal administration. But the election had taken an odd turn. Most of the people in El Cuá and Bocay hated the Sandinista Front with a passion. Once peace had been established, some three thousand Contra commandos returned to the district, ready to start a new civilian life, and only thirty-two Sandinista soldiers did the same. Yet in the election campaign the anti-Sandinistas had suffered from a disastrous lack of political skills. A lot of people were undoubtedly too frightened to vote, especially on the isolated farms in the jungle. The anti-Sandinistas couldn't even round up a full slate of candidates for local offices.

The Sandinistas, on the other hand, enjoyed the support of the Sandinista organizations, the Army officers, the civil-defense committees, the government workers in El Cuá, and a few other people, too; and as a result the Sandinista Front ended up, by default, controlling the municipal council and the mayor's office of the two villages. Until 1994, there was a Sandinista vice-mayor, too, but then he was murdered by the re-Contras. Another leading Sandinista had to flee a lynch mob by hiding in an ambulance.

The only good news was that, in El Cuá and Bocay, the Sandinista mayor turned out to be a supremely gifted politician—a master, really. He had put in some quality drinking time with ex-officers of the Contra army, who were the naturally popular figures in the region, and had convinced them that Sandinista doctrine, in his own version, meant the pro-peasant views of General Sandino from the past—not the atheist, totalitarian, Cuban, satanic, and anti-peasant views of the Sandinista Front from the present. The ex-Contras looked on their Sandinista mayor with real fondness. He went around wearing a baseball cap that said "Harlem–West Side Senior League," courtesy of a surviving remnant of the Sandinista solidarity movement in New York City.

In Bocay, however, there was really no government at all. Instead, there were three armed groups. In a concrete bunkhouse in the village plaza was the police department, consisting of demobilized Contras and a few re-Contras from the Talavera brothers' 3-80 Northern Front. Up the hill was a garrison of the Sandinista People's Army. The Sandinista soldiers and the 3-80 Northern Front policemen did not love one another. The patron saint of Bocay is Joseph, and every year a festival in his name goes on for three weeks, which means a lot of alcohol. A few days before the O.A.S. convoy dropped me off, a Sandinista soldier had drunk one too many at the festival, and a 3-80 policeman, who was himself none too sober, asked him to leave. Soon the soldier was dead, and the Sandinista Army on the



A new series of peasant uprisings, the "re-Contra" movement—a humorous name, as in "refried" beans—got under w hill and the 3-80 policemen in the plaza ended up banging away at one another with automatic weapons for two days.

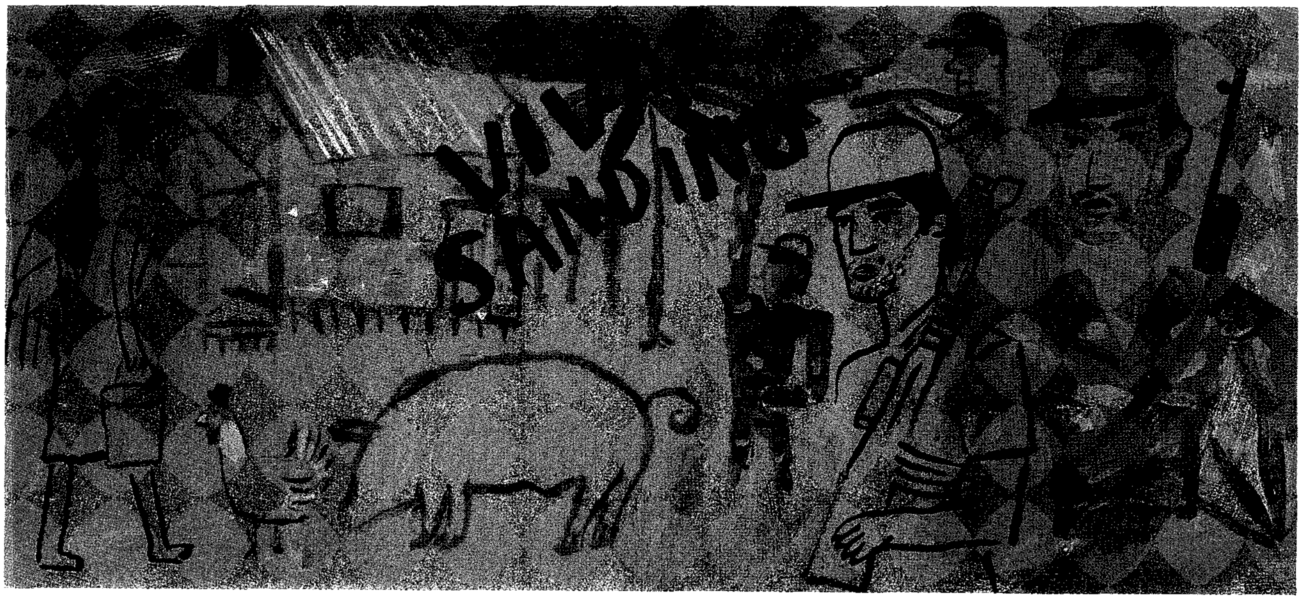
But the scariest group was the third armed force—the renegade re-Contras of El Charrito's splinter from the 3-80 Northern Front. These people were all over the countryside. One day, a man from a village north of Bocay took me aside to tell me that El Charrito's men had burned down his house and had raped his wife and left her naked. She had gone out of her mind, and the re-Contras who had done these things were criminals and madmen—and it was too bad that a good, honorable leader like El Charrito would surround himself with such men. For El Charrito's cause was just. El Charrito doesn't rob or rape: he kills only thieves and Sandinistas. Recently, El Charrito held a public meeting.

Bocay's single street was lined with rough-cut wooden shacks and stalls, where cheap manufactured items were on sale—rubber boots, plastic handbags, baseball caps, and other artifacts of international capitalism which had somehow made their way northward from Managua or across the border from Honduras. Women and children stepped barefoot among the pigs and roosters and mud puddles. The spectacle was one of abject poverty, abuzz with trade. Because of the river fords and the bad condition of the road, the place was unreachable by ordinary automobiles, but from time to time an East German transport truck, left over from the war, rumbled by, serving as a public bus. Horsemen cantered up and down the street. There were eleven chapels—one for the Catholics and the rest for the Jehovah's Witnesses, Free Apostles, Nazarenes, Seventh-Day Adventists, Pentecostalists of the Assembly of God, and so forth. Bocay was a fundamentalist extravaganza. And there were three restaurants, including one that was called, in semi-English, the Five Star Restaurante—Bocay's finest, featuring posters of half-naked women on motorcycles and a Mexican mariachi star in a big-brimmed studded hat.

IT was at the Five Star that I met the widow Linder—a gringa for real, with a long face and delicate hands and a broad strand of white running through her hair that made her look like a peeled coconut. She was Rebecca Leaf, Linder's friend and engineering colleague in Managua—the woman who had answered the phone at the electric utility in 1987 and heard the news about the killings at the weir above Bocay. No, she was not really the widow Linder, she explained to me. Yet her friendship with Linder had certainly turned out to be the fateful element in her life. The phone call announcing his death still rang in her memory. It had been her obligation after receiving that call to go across the street from the utility office to the telephone office, where you could make international calls, and to try to reach Linder's parents in Oregon. She wasn't able to get through. She called her own mother, in Massachusetts, and asked her to telephone the Linders. Sitting with me at the Five Star Restaurante in Bocay, Rebecca trembled, ever so slightly, as she remembered those moments.

She was one of the people who had organized the protest march from El Cuá to Bocay after Linder's funeral. When the march reached Bocay, she and a couple of Linder's fellow-workers would have liked to go up the hill to see what was left of the temporary dam that he had been building, but the Contras were around, and going up the hill was out of the question. Still, even without inspecting the weir, Rebecca could see that if Linder's work in Bocay was not to have been in vain someone would have to take up where he had left off, and that person would have to be a trained engineer. Someone who knew how to build a hydroelectric plant. Herself, namely. At first, she lived in the agrarian-reform building in the Bocay plaza, which must have been somewhat like her hippie experiences in the Massachusetts barn, except a million times as extreme. When it seemed safe to climb the hill, she discovered that the weir was intact, though unfinished. Eventually, the commandos blew it up, but by then Rebecca had been able to calculate where to build the permanent dam.

A number of Linder's American friends—Don Macleay and Mira Brown, from the El Cuá project; a machinist named John Lewontin—came and worked on the project for periods up to a year. The



very first of the battles, the re-Contras versus the Sandinista People's Army, took place outside Bocay in 1991.

Linder family's tours around the United States raised a good deal of money for Rebecca's project. A solidarity campaign of American machinists and engineers sent lathes and machine parts. But that was before the 1990 election.

Afterward, what was left for Rebecca Leaf? Suddenly it was obvious that a worldwide socialist revolution of the poor countries was not going to occur, and Sandinista Nicaragua was not going to be a light unto the Third World, and the political excitement that had led people like Rebecca and Linder to think of building hydroelectric plants in jungle villages was gone forever. The engineers' and machinists' solidarity campaign pretty much disintegrated. Life in Bocay was monotonous and filthy, and was not getting any less so.

There were matters like malaria and cholera to worry about. It was always possible that one of the old Contras might someday resume the attack on the hydroelectric project—especially after the re-Contra rebellion got going. Rebecca had organized a machine shop in El Cuá, and the re-Contras kidnapped one of the workers. She watched in horror as the Talavera brothers' 3-80 Front went around blowing up electric lines.

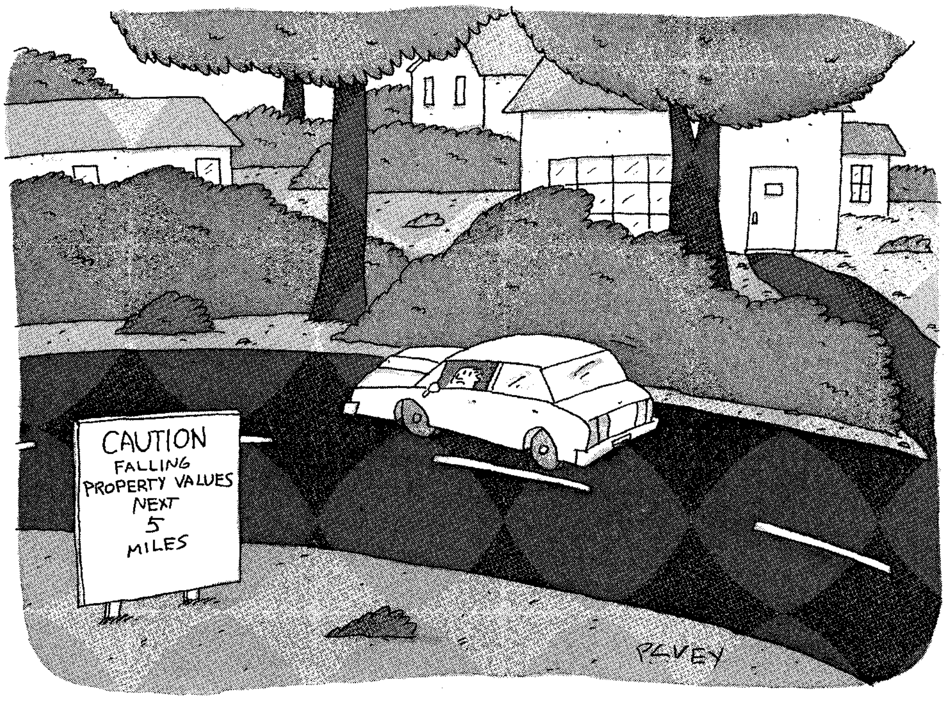
Yet the issue of whether to stay on in Bocay seemed simple enough. The revolution was finished, but the revolution's purpose, in its original, uncorrupted version, had always been to improve the life of the very poor, and that was still possible. There was not going to be a socialist society; but there could be a hydroelectric plant. In the United States, the Linder family and some of Linder's friends were willing to go on raising funds, if Rebecca wished them to do so. People in Berkeley sent contributions. There was aid from the government of Sweden. The Nicaraguans who had gone to work for Linder and had been trained by him and his American fellow-workers—and, later, by Rebecca—were willing to keep on laboring. They organized themselves into a committee called the Benjamin Linder Rural Development Workers' Association. It consisted of thirteen Nicaraguans and one gringa graduate of M.I.T. Rebecca never doubted what was the right thing to do. She was exactly like Linder in that regard.

She was known as Doña Rebecca now, a respected lady in her mid-forties. I walked with her along Bocay's street, and she received the greetings of people we passed. She had long since made peace with the old Contras. The original laborers on her dam had been Sandinistas, but she was clever enough to recognize that her hydroelectric project could never get anywhere as the partisan enterprise of an unpopular party, and she swallowed hard and hired veterans of the Contra army to aid in the construction. The Contras were glad to have the work, and were surprised to get it, and afterward were grateful, too. Rebecca was a little nervous about telling the Linder family that she had hired the Contras to work on Ben's project. But the Linders trusted her judgment.

A new handful of Americans came down to work with her. One of them was Benjamin Linder's older brother, John, who toiled over the billing system and a few other tasks connected with the project. John Linder marvelled at the austerity of Rebecca's life—her barren room with her clothes stuffed in a coffee sack, the outhouse down the hill, her insomniac nights of counting out bolts and washers by flashlight. But this life of hers was visibly productive. The permanent dam was built. It was eighteen metres across, a wall of concrete.

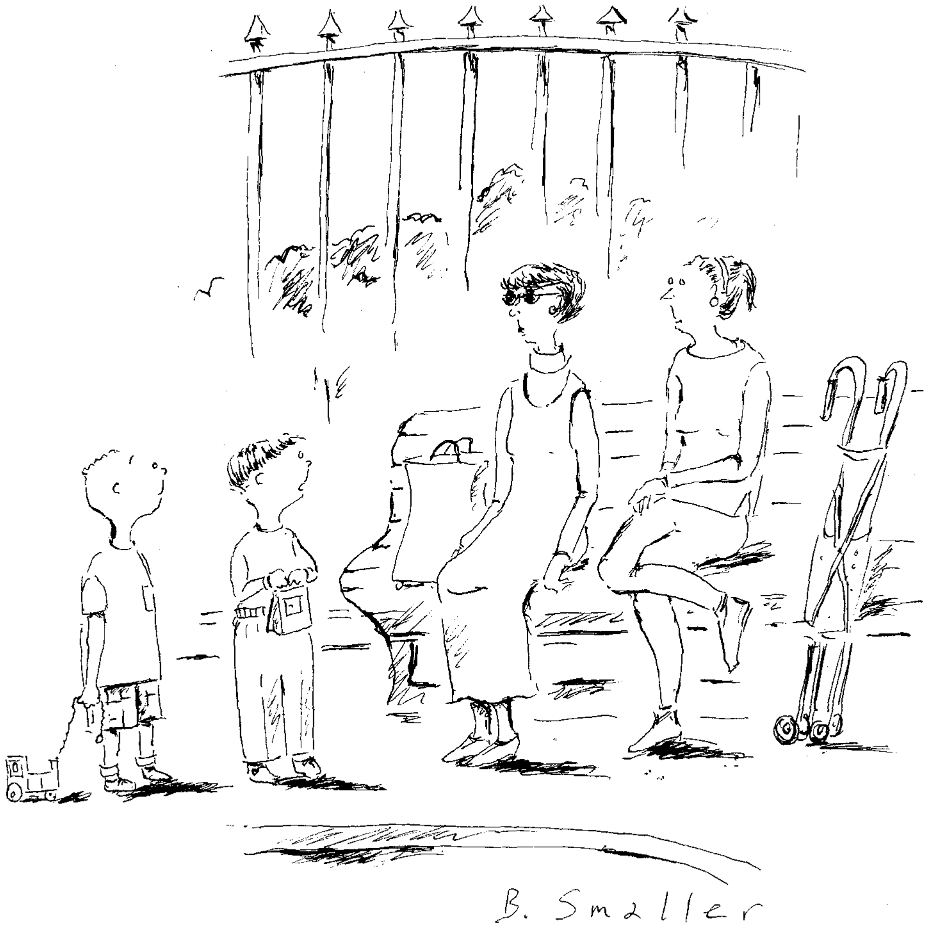
Water from the runoff tumbled two hundred metres down the hill to a square concrete house, where she put the turbines and the generator. In May, 1994, the Linder family flew from the United States to Managua, then to Bocay by military helicopter, and observed as the Benjamin Linder Hydroelectric Mini-Power Plant was inaugurated, with balloons, clowns, a unicycle, and cockfights. Electricity flowed through suspended wires down the hill to Bocay. The village's dental offices went electric. The public school added night classes. The stores began to sell cold drinks. A corn mill and several carpentry shops were electrified. A video theatre opened. That was Rebecca Leaf's achievement—that and the perpetuation of Benjamin Linder's memory. Near the Benjamin Linder Mini-Power Plant dam was the Benjamin Linder School. In another school, the assigned topic for commencement addresses was "Benjamin Linder." A new settlement was constructed a few miles away, and Rebecca ran a cable out to the new houses, and the householders responded by naming their neighborhood the Benjamin Linder Barrio.

Rebecca ushered me into the power plant to show off the machine-tooling. The place was the size of a one-car garage. The turbines gave out a tremendous roar. She took me up to the dam. A wooden boom in the stream had got out of place, and I went into the woods and found a long stick so she could poke at the boom. When everything was back



in order, she stood at the edge of the dam and surveyed her little empire and the rushing water, and the women washing clothes downstream, and the concrete house that gave out a roar from the whirring turbines, and the green jungle all around.

Her two sisters in the United States hoped, Rebecca confessed to me, that one day she would awaken from the terrible insanity that had obviously overtaken her, and would return to America and lead a normal life. She didn't rule out such a possibility. Meanwhile, the European Union had opened an office in Bocay and come up with money for a potable-water project, and Doña Rebecca was running around with her shirttails hanging out, supervising the water technology. There was a rice-hulling project. She was a busy woman. Yet, for all her plans and activity, the weight of the past seemed not to have grown very much lighter. I mentioned that I was interested in finding anyone who might have participated in the events of April 28, 1987—that I would like to find one of the Contras from the task force that had killed Linder. Doña Rebecca looked as if she were going to tremble again and asked in a whisper if I happened to know someone named Joan Kruckewitt. I told her that Joan was soon coming up to Bocay, and that she and I were going to make the search together.



"I would share my cookies, but I'm afraid I'll set up a cycle of dependency."

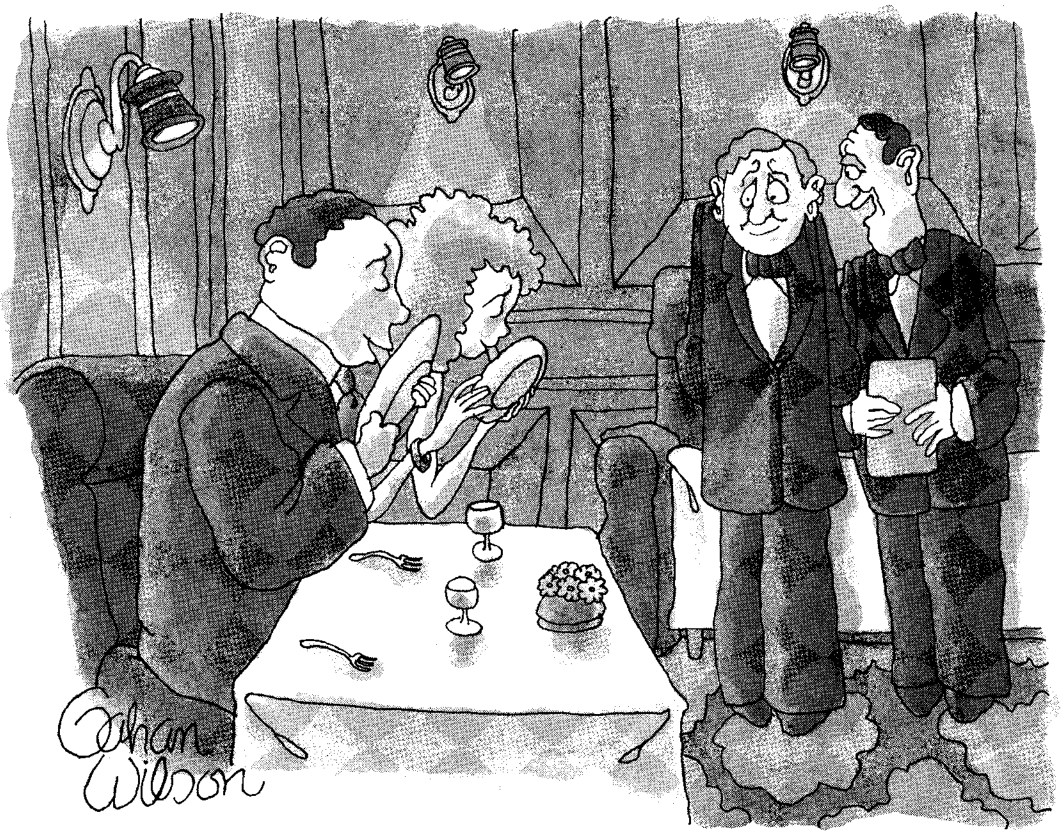
• •

I MET Joan back in Managua, and we hired a driver and a jeep and set a day to drive up to Bocay on our own. But just then El Charrito's group, from somewhere deep within the north, issued a proclamation—handwritten on 3-80 Northern Front stationery and sealed with a Contra stamp from the mid-nineteen-eighties—forbidding road traffic anywhere in Nicaragua for one week. The re-Contras had no chance of enforcing such a ban in most of the country, but Bocay was their terrain. The staff of the European Union office there thought it wise to pull out of the region for the moment, and Joan had a few errands to do in Managua, anyway. She had brought a sewing machine down from California and wanted to present it to her old housekeeper, Hortencia: a brilliant new idea for setting up Hortencia in business. A few days later, we read in the Managua papers that, sure enough, El Charrito and his men did go out on the northern roads, and burned five or six vehicles and beat up one of the drivers.

So we arrived in Bocay later than planned, and ended up booking stalls—you couldn't call them rooms—in Bocay's single lodging house, where the posted rules forbade anyone to drink liquor or to introduce explosives into the building. Bocay was not a restful place. At three in the morning, the East German truck pulled up in front to collect the farmworkers, and the noise and the fumes drove me out to the front porch, where I sat in the dark and listened to a grizzled peddler in a Philadelphia Flyers hat whisper about Sandinista massacres.

The Sandinistas had just slaughtered some of their own followers in the north, he said. The Sandinistas were going to blame the Resistance—the re-Contras, that is. The Sandinistas were Communists, the people were Christians. Another man on the porch nodded vigorous assent. And at sunup Joan and I went off to pay courtesy calls on Bocay's Contra veterans and to see if, by any chance, some of the former commandos of the Francisco Rodríguez Task Force might be found.

We were particularly curious about the man known as Williams—his real name was Santiago Girón Meza—who, according to what Bull's Eye had told Joan, might be living nearby. Williams was one of the commandos who had described Linder's killing to the American official back in 1987 and had signed his statement with a real signature, not just a thumbprint. We sat in the home of a former Contra officer named Seven Seas, and Joan cracked jokes and brought up Williams's name. Seven Seas said that Williams might be living in the mountains, two or three hours distant. We met someone else who knew the way and agreed to guide us. And we set out, up the steep hill in our jeep, past the Benjamin Linder Mini-Power Plant,



"Don't you just love it when they lick the plates?"

• •

then higher still, to the concrete dam, where the jungle swallowed up the path and we had to leave the jeep behind.

The terrain we walked through had the strange quality of being wilderness and farmland at the same time. Leaves the size of elephants protruded from plantain trees, and the bigger the leaves the tinier seemed the farms—stick-pile hovels surrounded by pathetic patches that could hardly have supported a human being. The ground was muddy, making it hard to walk, and when we found ourselves in purer forest the walking became harder still, until we were hopping from stone to stone across rivulets and pulling our ankles out of sinkholes. Yet just when the going seemed impossible we arrived at a farm more impressive than any we had seen—a field with three horses, a couple of dozen ducks and chickens, a few head of cattle, and patches of land growing coffee, corn, and beans, with a shack at the center. This was the farm of Williams's father, Don Rosa Girón, and his family. They came to sit with Joan and me and our guide on the porch: Don Rosa's wife in a brocaded, handwoven cotton dress; a young woman chic in red polyester; another young woman and a young man; and infants and small children. We expressed an interest in speaking with Don Rosa's son, the war veteran, and Don Rosa sent one of the little boys galloping off on horseback to find him.

Don Rosa was not a man of wide experience. Sometimes he travelled to Bocay to sell his beans and corn, though not often, because the trip took five hours there and back, not counting the time in town. Otherwise, he hadn't seen a lot of places. Even El Cuá lay beyond the periphery of his travels. But Don Rosa had accomplished something large in his life, which was to carve out his farm from pure wilderness. He had bought the land thirty years ago, and he and three sons had spent a year clearing out the growth with axes, machetes, and handsaws. They had lived in a straw hut, and eventually his oldest son had chopped down the tropical laurel trees and hewed the planks and built the shack that was now their home. Unfortunately, no sooner did the house go up than war came to the farm. Two battles between the Sandinista People's Army and the Contras were fought on Don Rosa's land.

The little boy trotted up on his horse and told us that Williams was waiting for us at another farm, and we said goodbye and praised the beauty of Don Rosa's land and plunged back onto the path. The second farmhouse was a dismal shed with cocks and a pig and a couple of little children peeking at us from inside. The mountain vista was grand, though. The farm was on a slope, and the ground fell away into the valley of a hamlet called Agua Zarca, with mountains beyond. Because of the rainy season, the mountain peaks and the valley seemed to radiate every color of the spectrum, if you can imagine every color as green. Williams was leaning over a railing on the porch. He was a man of twenty-five, three or four inches shorter than Joan, with black hair, a round bronze face, and an amiable smile, glinty with gold fillings.

Williams had grown up on the farm with his parents and his brothers and sisters. But in 1982—the year before Linder's arrival in Nicaragua, and Joan's—the two older Girón boys decided to run away to join the Resistance, and, because brothers follow brothers, Williams insisted on going along, though he was only thirteen. The oldest of the boys, the one who had built the house, was captured a year later by the Sandinistas and, Williams told us, was murdered. But Williams and the second brother made it through the war in one piece.

Williams spent part of the time in a Resistance camp in Honduras. The camp was full of preachers, he said, and one commando after another began to hear a personal message from God. The commandos learned that Catholics were not really Christians, as they had always been taught. True Christians belonged to the Assembly of God. And God spoke to Williams in Honduras in 1987. Somebody lent

Williams a Bible that came from the United States. His narrative of conversion leaned on that fact—for my benefit and Joan's, or perhaps because the American provenance lent the Bible authority. Williams promised God that if he survived the war he would live the upright life of a good Christian. Then it was 1990, and he and the other commandos from his unit returned from the war, and he set out to fulfill his promise.

God's word had spread by then to the hamlet of Agua Zarca, and though the Girón family as a whole remained Catholic, many other people became true Christians. They met for services at the chapel of the Assembly of God in Agua Zarca. Williams was one of the new preachers. He preached to his neighbors about the coming of Jesus Christ—soon, soon, before the next millennium. He did not drink or dance or use bad words or engage in dishonesty in business. Whenever he had the chance, he made his way through the jungle into Bocay and attended Bible class. The teacher was a man who had studied in Managua. Williams was now newly married. The stylish young woman in red back at his father's farm was his wife.

Williams and I had been talking together up to this point, but now Joan asked about the war. Wasn't it around here that a North American had died?

Williams had a poker face.

"What was his name?" he asked.

"Benjamin Linder," she said. "I think your group was involved."

Williams had been enjoying our visit until that moment—had seemed to be, anyway.

"I think it was," he said.

But he was cautious. His unit, yes, had killed the North American. But he himself had been elsewhere—on another mission. Or lagging behind. Either way, he wasn't there, wasn't responsible for killing a North American—even if it was true, as Joan reminded him, that his name, and even his signature, appeared in the State Department reports. But he could definitely tell us about the event, down to its tiniest particulars. He could tell us why the unit had attacked the group at the dam. It was because the people in the area had said that Cubans were working on the dam. Killing Cubans was a basic task. And so the commandos in his unit had walked two hours through the jungle to the dam, and they had lain in wait two hours more for the Sandinistas and the Cubans. The commandos opened fire and then threw hand grenades.

Just at this point in Williams's story, a bare-chested young man carrying a machete in each hand came wandering down the path to the shack and peered at us with wide-eyed wonder. The man was an apparition out of Joan's worst fantasies, and mine. I jumped up and left Joan to go on with the questioning, and I tried to strike up a cheerful, diversionary conversation with the new arrival and, at the same time, to block his view.

Behind us, the conversation between Joan and Williams was lumbering on, and with a phrase here and there the gist of Williams's descriptions was audible. That was exactly what I didn't want the newcomer to overhear. So I asked, "Are you from around here?"

The man with two machetes tilted his head.

I rephrased the question.

His chin pointed up the hill.

"And how are the crops?"

"Good."

"How is your own farm?"

Silence. "We are poor," he said. "We have always been poor. We do not have a farm."

The situation was awkward beyond all awkwardness. "It is a beautiful view from here," I said.

Two Machetes looked at me with wonder.

"Yes, what a view!" I went on. "Very beautiful. Very, but very. What is your own opinion?"

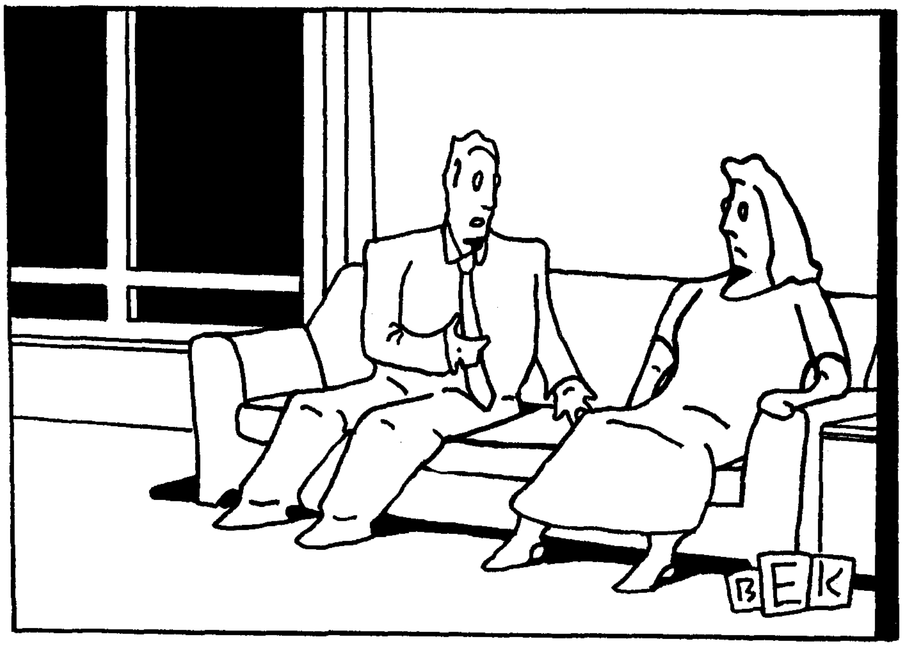
But it was no use. Behind us, Joan, in the bell tones of her radio announcer's voice, was probing for details. "I thought that during the attack Ben Linder was wounded."

"No, he died at once," I could hear Williams answer. There was no torture or execution, in short. "He died. Because—as I told you—the information was that he was a Cuban."

The ambush, he said, was from fifteen metres away. Anything closer would have allowed the Sandinista group to begin firing. "The Resistance shot first," Williams said. This was a new admission—not at all the version that had appeared in the official documents. Raccoon, the unit leader, had searched Linder's body without ever discovering that it was the corpse of a foreigner.

"He had a camera. He was next to a gun that . . . I don't know if he was carrying it or not." That, too, was new. In the official reports, the Contras had claimed that Linder had fired his weapon.

Our guide had been standing at a discreet distance from Two Machetes and me but now came over to join the conversation. We talked about regional accents, and, as we rambled on, Wil-



"Let's cut the exposition and get straight to the sex."

liams described to Joan how on the day after the ambush the unit received an extraordinary order to leave Jinotega at once and return to Resistance headquarters, in Honduras, on foot. The trek took eight days, and only when they had reached the camp did they learn that in the fighting outside Bocay they had killed a North American.

Comandante 3-80 spoke to them in person, in a harsh tone. He called their attack on the hill above Bocay "the failure." All kinds of people came to speak to the little unit—journalists, Americans. Williams had the impression that Linder's own family were among the people who came to the commandos demanding an explanation. It was a terrifying time. The secret cemeteries that surrounded the Contra military camps in Honduras were not really a secret, after all. Everyone knew what happened to people who incurred the displeasure of the Contra comandantes, and, as for what might happen to people who incurred the displeasure of the United States, that was beyond knowing. At that very moment, with his eyes trained on Joan, Williams must have been sick with worry about the consequences of incurring the displeasure of the United States.

And what about the soldiers in Williams's unit, the Francisco Rodríguez Task Force, and their fate? Williams paused to recall. About half of those men were killed in combat. The survivors came back to Bocay and the jungle hamlets at the end of the war, and most of them settled down into civilian life—all except Raccoon, the man who had searched Linder's body. Raccoon had joined the Resistance back in 1981, when the Sandinistas confiscated his father's farm, and now, Williams told Joan, he was still at war. He was with the re-Contras north of Bocay.

A violent squall broke out, and we huddled under the tiny porch roof. When Joan and I and the guide headed out in the direction of Bocay, the mud was squishier and deeper than before. It was late afternoon before we reached the concrete dam. We rode in the jeep down the steep hill into Bocay, and Joan and I went to the Five Star Restaurante and exchanged impressions. Granted that Williams had very sensibly insisted on his own absence from the attack at the dam, he had given us a thorough account, full of visual memories. His story countered the State Department and the official Contra versions of the attack, and the more extreme Sandinista accusations, too. Linder and his fellow-workers had not started the fighting. There had been no order to execute an American. He had not been tortured. What about the theory of a gunshot at close range—a coup de grâce? Williams's version denied any such thing. The ambush at the dam had been an incident of war based on a rumor about Cubans—nothing more. Mostly, though, Joan and I had learned about the people who had done the killing.

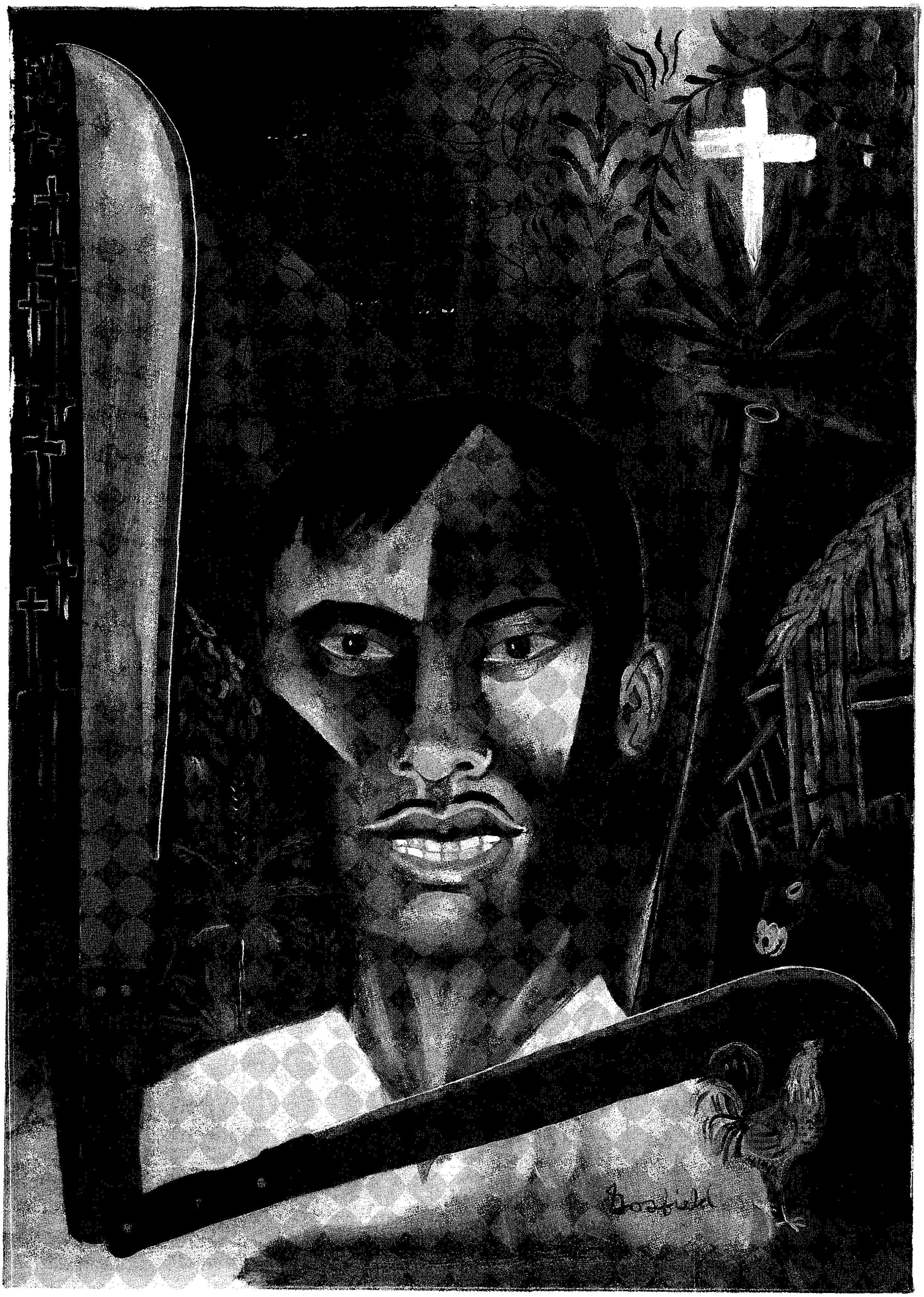
We had learned that Linder was killed by a group of poor peasant boys who came from the neighborhood of Bocay itself—by the very people who were supposed to benefit from the new hydroelectric plant. We had learned that Williams was an earnest and religious man, concerned with his duties to God and with living a moral existence, as he conceived it; he was someone who, through his preaching, enjoyed making his own contribution to the community life of his hamlet.

We had learned, we had seen with our own eyes, that Williams was strikingly like Benjamin Linder, a Goody Two-Shoes, let us say. Where Linder's Two-Shoes spirit of militant virtue had come from a puritanism of the left, though, Williams's came from a Protestant fundamentalism, or from capital-"P" Puritanism itself. The one man had been fervently idealistic and perhaps a little blinded by his fervor, though likable even so, and, in his way, admirable; and the other man was the same.

It was just that one was living and the other was dead. And the one who lived, on those occasions when he trekked into Bocay to sell coffee and corn and to attend the classes that were held by the Assembly of God, was the beneficiary of the one who was dead. For when Williams left home as a thirteen-year-old to go to war, Bocay had had no electricity, and now, when the young husband and war veteran wished to study the Word of God, Bocay was a town with lights, refrigerators, videos, and night classes—a place where you could study and improve yourself, using the Bible or any other book (though other books were not exactly prominent among the items for sale), according to your preference. And so Linder, together with Doña Rebecca, had won a triumph, and men like Williams were better off for it.

THE next afternoon, Joan and I joined up with a new O.A.S. convoy to return to Managua. On the way out of Bocay, we ran across a group of refugees. We were told that a number of re-Contras high on marijuana had attacked a hamlet called Santa Teresa de Kilambé and burned a house, and forty people had fled to Bocay. The O.A.S. gave these people some emergency rations, which turned out to be packaged meals from the United States Army—the meals that are famously loathed by all American soldiers. Joan and I were called on to explain how to tear open the packets and convert the contents into food. Gravely, the crowd of refugees watched our demonstration.

Down the road, on the way south to El Cuá, we ran into two more refugees. They were a woman, riding a dappled horse, and an infant, swathed in cloth, on the pommel of her saddle. We stopped the jeep and asked what had happened, and the woman told us that her name was María Navarrete Chavarría. She was twenty-four years old and the mother of five children. Three re-Contras had come to her house and had taken her husband away and murdered him. She and the children had fled into the mountains, and she was now on her way to Bocay, and as she told us these things her voice wavered and her lungs heaved and she stroked her infant's hair. These were not scenes of triumph after all. The story of Benjamin Linder and his death is the story of how the war in northern Nicaragua was more bitter than anyone in the outside world has appreciated. And it is the story of how, in some very remote places, the war has never come to an end—there in a couple of jungle villages, where the people now enjoy the blessings of electricity but not those of peace and safety, and where, because of an American woman's spirit of defiance and undying comradely love, the honored name of Benjamin Linder has virtually been engraved into the backcountry geography. ♦



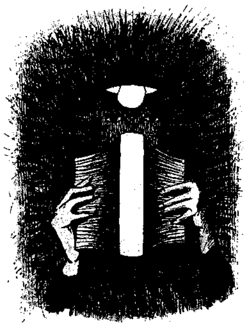
At a farm in the mountains near Bocay, we were to learn how and why Ben Linder had died.

FICTION

GRAFFITI

How much can a blind woman see?

BY DAVID GILBERT



IT wasn't a bad job for someone like me, pushing mops and cleaning blackboards. In fact, it was the best job I'd had in a long time. Sometimes I even enjoyed scrubbing the tiny urinals, the tiny desks. It put me in my own little world.

I was sitting at one of those desks, my legs splayed out like wings, talking to Alistair, the other janitor. We were on one of our many breaks. Being a night janitor took only two hours of real work; the rest of the time was spent smoking or drinking or shooting hoops in the gym with the security guard.

"I made my bathroom light go off," Alistair was telling me. "I was in bed and I didn't want to get up so I just shot my brain at the switch and it clicked off." He snapped his fingers. "Like that." Alistair had been a janitor at St. Vincent's Elementary for twelve years and was too accustomed to ammonium chloride. His eyes were glass buttons and the corners of his mouth collected an odd milky substance. He straightened up in his chair and said, "Here, watch," and, after a few seconds of flexing his facial muscles, he stared hard at the discarded bucket and mop in the middle of the classroom. His palms went to his temples, his eyes strained. This lasted a minute. "There," he said, his face loosening. "Did you see that?"

"What?"

"The handle—it twitched." Alistair had fantasies about letting his mind do all the work, like Mickey Mouse in "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." "Someday, Dave, it'll happen. This place'll be plugged into my brain."

ONCE in a while, during the day, I'd pretend that I had left something behind in the custodial closet and I'd come back to the school and walk the halls of the first and second and third graders. The teachers were mostly women. They were beautiful and all seemed recently married, a few years away from having kids themselves. The girls and boys must have loved them—the Mrs. Andrewses, the Mrs. Kirklands. I'd eavesdrop on basic math, on beginning English, on weather patterns and why it rains, and during storytelling I'd bend down and tie my shoes for a good five minutes. Those soft voices, the gentle pronunciations. But most of the time I tried to make my visit coincide with recess or lunch. The children would be hopping down the halls and they would brush against my sides. I'd lift up my arms, carried on a stream of pigtails and bowl cuts.

VINCE, the security guard, came around quite often, walking with an apple stuck in his mouth, intrigued by the power of his own teeth, especially the ability to grip and scar. He had visions of State Patrol, of those crisp hats and sleek nine-millimetres. He enjoyed talking to me, because for a short time I had been in prison.

"Now, how did it work?" he asked.

"What?" I was erasing a blackboard with a damp cloth.

"The scam."

"It was no big deal," I told him, making my way along the blackboard, the words disappearing under each sweep of my hand. The newly wet slate resembled a windshield at night. Then it fogged dry.

"C'mon, just tell me again." Vince sat down at the teacher's desk.

"It was called 'End Hunger Now.' "

Alistair moved the mop in a lazy arc. "They were going to save Cambodia," he said.

"No, Ethiopia."

"Right, Africa." Alistair bent down to the lip of the yellow bucket and listened as if it were the opening of a mysterious shell. He said a hollow "Charity."

Vince had a smile on his face. "And it was all phony."

I nodded.

"How much did you take in before Johnny Fuzz?"

"About fifty thousand. But I was just the footman. I answered phones, took credit-card numbers. That's it. For a while I even thought I was doing some good, that there were actually victims out there."

"Shit," Vince said. "And they sent you to the pen for that?"

"I also had a couple of bad checks floating around."

"Hello," Alistair said into the bucket.

"But the big house?" asked Vince.

Books and TV, I thought, that's what prison is, with incredible flashes of violence thrown in between. I made my way to the erasers.

Alistair grabbed the mop and dumped its gray yarn into the bucket as if he were drowning a dog.

THE next afternoon, I walked by the community center three or four times before I went in. The building was an old bomb shelter, the outside walls two feet thick and windowless and painted pink in absurd hope of making it appear dainty, like a giant box of Kleenex. I had always pictured the inside to be a place where children cut out construction-paper flowers and stuck them to the walls; where old people talked of the old days and collected raffle tickets for some upcoming dance. But instead it was all white light and metal furniture. Of the three desks, only one was occupied, and the occupant seemed as if she had been trapped inside this bunker since a war known only to herself. I asked her about the possibilities of volunteering, of helping others in need, and she pointed toward the corner and said, "Try the Good Samaritan Board."

"The Good Samaritan Board." I glanced in the direction of her finger. "O.K., thanks."

The Good Samaritan Board was covered with tacked-up yellow, blue, and white note cards. It was a mosaic of pain. A paraplegic needs someone to rub his useless legs. A stroke victim needs someone to give her twice-weekly drives to the physical therapist. A terminal-cancer case needs someone to adopt her dog. I stood there, hands

FILIP PAGOWSKI

in pockets, reading up and down, taking in every word underlined and punched with exclamations. *Please! Thank You!* All these wrecked bodies waiting at home for a savior, and all I had to do was reach out and pick one. But there were too many choices. It was like being at a video store with all those movies and trying to pick the perfect one that would salvage your Saturday night.

I closed my eyes and grabbed a card at random and carried it outside with me, like a ticket of admission. Written in a textbook cursive, the letters were round and well connected: A blind woman needs someone to read to her. By the time I was halfway down Main Street, and standing in front of Red's Saloon, draft beer for a buck, I had the phone number memorized.

THE patrons of Red's were hunched over the bar as if stationed on an assembly line picking out the bad peanuts from the good. On the raised TV a nature program played. A tortoise, long past struggling, was dying on its back. A British voice narrated and made things sound beautiful.

I went over to the phone. On the third ring, someone answered. "Hello?"

"Yes, hi, is this Mrs. Freninger?"

"Did I win a prize or something?"

"Well, no."

"Didn't think so. So what do you want?"

"Well, Mrs. Freninger, I'm calling about your—"

"Car? I sold it. The kid screwed me, too."

"No, no, I'm calling about your notice for someone to read to you."

"Jesus, I put that up ages ago."

"Well, I'm looking to do some volunteer work."

"Are you a misdemeanor or a student?"

"Neither, really. I just want to do something decent."

"Ha. Help the little old blind lady, huh?"

"Well—"

"What movie star do you look like?"

"What?"

"C'mon, I'm not going to touch your face, I find that whole concept disgusting and uninformative."

"I guess a skinny, shorter, non-ethnic Victor Mature." "The Robe" was my favorite movie as a kid. But I probably look more like Joey Bishop.

"He was an awful actor. Well, Victor, can you read clearly?"

"Sure."

"Did you go to college?"

"Yeah." I spent a year at the community college.

"What do you do for a living?"

"I'm a carpenter." My mind was still on "The Robe," and I figured everyone trusts a carpenter. No one trusts a night janitor. Or Joey Bishop.

"Well, Victor—"

"It's Dave."

"I don't know Dave, I know Victor Mature. Why don't you come over at six o'clock on Thursday. We'll have a trial read." Then she gave me her address. Before hanging up she told me she had a dog. "A German shepherd," she said with an edge of threat.

AT work, Alistair sat at a third grader's desk. In his hand he held a Mr. Clean-soaked rag, which he occasionally brought to his nose. "Yesterday," he said, "I changed the channels with my head. Flick, 'Oprah.' Flick, QVC. Flick, CNN."

I was wiping down the blackboard's last lesson. *The boy was sad. The boy is now happy. The boy will be sad again.* "A bit depressing," I said.

"No, I was doing it. I've got power." He started to scrub the desk. "*Mr. Vickers is a fag.*"

"What?"

He pointed to the desktop. "Says it right here: *Mr. Vickers is a fag.*" Alistair laughed. "*Mr. Vickers sucks cock.*"

I walked over to Alistair.

"*Mr. Vickers eats kids' crap.* Jesus, these kids are something."

"Nailed the plural possessive," I said.

"Poor Mr. Vickers."

"A good teacher, though."

Alistair breathed on the desk and rubbed the writing away. Mr. Vickers was easily restored.

MRS. FRENINGER'S house was a nice house, a house that belonged in a row of houses. Alone, it would be ridiculous, but here, with the other houses on this street, it fulfilled a moving picture of community.

I was smoking, watching the windows, but there wasn't much to see. Gauzy curtains blurred the inside. I had a feeling of stagefright. Disabilities and deformities make me anxious. I finished the cigarette and flicked it on her well-kept lawn, knowing that litter would not be noticed. After climbing the steps and opening the screen door, I paused before knocking. It felt like a date, a first date.

Mrs. Freninger was quick to answer. "Yes?"

She was taller than I thought a blind woman should be, and firmer, but I was glad that she wore dark glasses, though the frames seemed overly stylish. I feared dead milky eyes, or worse, empty sockets. The only other thing I noticed, besides her sharp nose, well-defined chin, and pulled-back blond-gray hair, was that she wore a healthy application of Tulsa-red lipstick.

"Hello, Mrs. Freninger."

"Is this Victor?"

"Yes."

"You smoke, Victor?"

"Yes."

"You drink?"

"Well . . ."

"I hate the smell of smoke and drink. And I hate cologne, especially Brut and Canoe."

"I don't wear cologne."

"I know."

She angled her head as if hearing my features in the shape of my plain words. "Well, come in and sit down in the far-right chair, it has the best light." She moved aside so that I could pass, and then she went to the couch, maneuvering around a coffee table and a sleeping dog. Everything in the room was clean and tidy except for dust on the lampshades. Books were arranged in three bookshelves.

I squirmed in my chair. "Nice place," I said.

"How old are you?" she asked.

"Thirty-one. Nice dog." I clicked my tongue, but the dog didn't move.

"Some society gave him to me. But I'm sorry, I'm not going to let a stupid dog lead me around. Too degrading. And canes are out of the question. Tap, tap, tap. I don't think so."

My left knee rocked up and down, a nervous habit. "Well . . ."

"A year ago, Victor. Went to get my lashes dyed but the beautician screwed up and sprayed the junk in my eyes. I sued and lost. My husband's gone and run off to California to pursue some absurd acting career. I don't watch TV, because sometimes his sly voice comes on telling me to buy a Buick or a Friendly's shake. I've lived in this town all my life and no one likes me much, which is fine. A hired friend comes over three times a week. She's Mexican."

"Well . . ."

"I just wanted to let you know my sad tale, Victor. Now yours."

"What?"

"C'mon, spill it."

I leaned forward and lifted one hand high in the air, then another; then I proceeded to wave them wildly as if on a roller coaster. "I moved into town recently. I'm a carpenter, a freelance carpen-

“So, does anyone in the group feel like responding to what Richard has just shared with us?”

• •

ter.” Was there such a thing? I had no idea. “I’ve been to college,” I said, pretending to swim, cupped hand stroking after cupped hand. “I wanted to be a doctor but was no good in science.” I pinched my nose and drowned. “I grew up in Hartford.” I’ve never been to Hartford, but I added, for authenticity, “I hated that dump.” During this whole performance her face remained unchanged.

“Fascinating, Victor.” She crossed her long legs. She wore black stockings that tapered into high heels. “On the table by your left hand is a book. Pick it up.”

It was “Adam Bede,” by George Eliot. I knew “Middlemarch”—Dorothea Brooke and Lydgate and all the rest; I had read it in jail, like so many other soft timers. It helped you get an early parole. The warden believed that literature could rehabilitate the nonviolent offender, and he especially liked Eliot’s sense of justice. But this book I didn’t know.

“I love George Eliot,” Mrs. Freninger said. “So detailed, everything placed before you. But I haven’t read ‘Adam Bede.’ I always hated the title.” She sat back, her arms stretching along the slope of the couch. I stuck my tongue out at her. I picked my nose. I put on a silly face. “Please, read,” she said.

The spine of the old book cracked, and the pages left dusty traces on my fingers. I coughed a few times, then swallowed and rested my feet on the coffee table. “*Book One. Chapter I. ‘The Workshop.’*” I paused for effect. “*With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen, I will show you the roomy workshop of Mr. Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder, in the village of Hayslope, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June, in the year of our Lord 1799.*” I stopped and looked to her for approval. I had read flawlessly.

“Sounds like you and Mr. Burge have something in common,” she said.

“What?”

“Both carpenters.”

“Oh yeah, right.”

She sat back. “Continue please, and a little slower,” she said. “Punctuate.”

I read for over an hour, with my throat becoming increasingly dry and sore. Halfway through, as the sun lowered, lights clicked on all over the house. “They’re on a timer,” Mrs. Freninger said. When I finished the fourth chapter, “Home and Its Sorrows,” I closed the book. It was time for work. “Well, thank you, Victor.” She seemed pensive, a bit tired. Light reflected from her glasses. I flapped my arms in a bad impersonation of a chicken, then grabbed my crotch, but her face didn’t change, and the dog by her side hadn’t moved since my arrival. As I was leaving, Mrs. Freninger asked me to come close to her. She picked up a tape recorder. “Give me your phone number, Victor.”

ALISTAIR, Vince, and I shot hoops in the school gym that night. We played Horse. Alistair couldn’t sink a thing and was out almost instantly, but he didn’t care. Vince and I were even, at H-O.

“So what’s this blind lady like?” Vince asked.

“All right.” I missed. H-O-R.

“Are her eyes all fucked up?” Before Vince shot, he bounced the ball against his head a few times.

“No, she’s attractive.” I missed again. H-O-R-S. “Kind of like Barbara Stanwyck—an older Barbara Stanwyck, like when she was in ‘The Big Valley.’ ”

“Huh?”

“You know, that ‘Bonanza’ rip-off, with Lee Majors and Linda Evans.”

“Ah shit, too bad she doesn’t look like Linda Evans.” Vince picked at his undershirt. “Then we could go over there and do all sorts of stuff. How’d she know who it was? The perfect crime.” Vince winked at me, then shot and missed. H-O-R. “Dammit.” He retrieved the ball and slapped at it as if he were slapping a face. Then he passed it to me.

I missed.

Vince made an opposite-hand layup, something I’m lousy at, and he won. “I’ll tell you what,” he said. “I’ll give you an exclamation point.”

“That’s all right, I’m done.”

“C’mon, let’s keep it going. How about a quick game of Pig?”

“Nope.”

We had to help Alistair to his feet; he’d been feeling dizzy. “Thanks, guys,” he said. “For a second there I thought you were throwing my head around.”

“*THE mirror is doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed, the reflection faint or confused; but I feel as much bound to tell you as precisely as I can what that reflection is, as if I were in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath.*”

“Excuse me, Victor.” Mrs. Freninger rose from the couch and straightened her skirt. “I hate to stop you, but I need to pee.” She left down the hall, each step confident. I heard a door shut.

I got up, moved a lamp, moved a side table, moved her glass of water to the farthest edge of the coffee table, moved a throw pillow, moved a porcelain figurine, an elephant, to the middle of the room, moved the hour hand of the grandfather clock back two hours, moved the couch six inches, moved a wastepaper basket. When Mrs. Freninger returned, she still maneuvered with precision, still plopped down onto the couch, still found her glass of water. "Victor," she said.

"Yes."

"Have you been drinking?"

"Yes."

"Well, you stink. And your reading's a bit sloppy. Continue."

When I came back a few days later, the house had been returned to its original state. But Mrs. Freninger didn't say a word, gave no hint of knowing anything.

I had started drinking during the day, at first in my apartment, then out at Red's. I met a woman there. She was paying for her drinks in change pulled out of a sock. "I was going to do my laundry," she said. "But fuck it." I smiled. I was smiling at everything. "*You* certainly could use a wash," she told me, and she reached over and grabbed me by the belt. Her name was Kat. The other people at the bar looked over, shaking their heads while Kat and I hit it off. She giggled and leaned into the curve of my neck. "You're funny," she said. I don't remember making any jokes, but I went with it. We left together. Back at my apartment, our clothes off, she guided her tits into my mouth; they smelled of bleach. She wanted me to grab at the Saturn tattoo on her inner thigh. "Pinch it," she said. And she wanted me to suck the Jupiter tattoo just above her collarbone. "That's right, suck it," she said. I felt as if I were hurtling through space, untethered to the mother ship, my oxygen running out. "Bite Neptune," she ordered, but I couldn't spot the little blue planet eighth from the sun. "C'mon, bite it," she said. And I found myself having momentary visions of my past. They came in little flashes, but they didn't make any sense to me. It was like watching a stranger's slide show. "C'mon." She slapped me on the side of the head.

Soon, I began to change the story, at first bit by bit. Adam Bede loosens up, enjoying a laugh in the middle of stern pronouncements. " '*It smells very sweet,' he said; 'those stripped uns have no smell. Stick it up your frock and it will smell a-plenty, and then you can put it in water after.'* " Mrs. Freninger didn't seem to notice. After a while, I made up whole paragraphs, introduced new characters, and, in general, caused chaos in the tiny village of Hayslope. Only once did she ever question anything.

"Victor."

"Yes," I said.

"Is there really a character named Dinah Shore?"

"Yes."

"I hated Dinah Shore, the singer Dinah Shore, not the young Methodist preacher. She I like. But the singer, too sunny."

It was on a Tuesday that I decided to stop showering for a while. I didn't brush my teeth anymore. I also began to eat meals heavy with garlic and onions and rarely changed my clothes. The odor that came from me was strong, like wet leaves burning.

"Jesus, you're ripe," Mrs. Freninger said at the door. "Can't you take a shower before coming here?"

"Sorry, I had to finish building a porch." I walked over to the chair and plugged in a tape player.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Just getting ready." I sat down.

She moved toward the couch but paused in the middle of the room, her chin slightly raised, the same way Grace Kelly raised her chin to Jimmy Stewart. "Do you want anything to drink?" she asked.

"No, I'm fine."

"Some water?"

"No, thanks."

She took her seat. "O.K.," she said. "I'm ready."

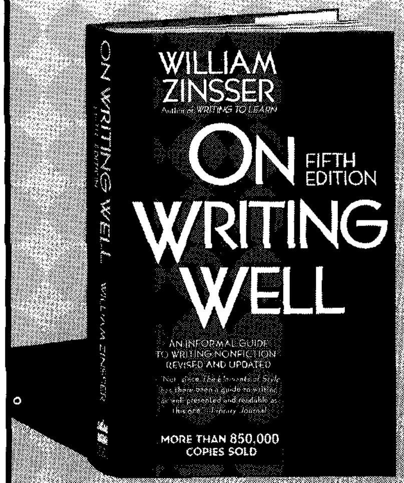
I pushed down the "Play" button. The cheap tape player's internal mechanism began to whirr. My voice emerged from the tiny speaker; distant and breathless and secretive, as recorded that morning in bed. "*Book Five. Chapter XXXVI. 'The Journey in Hope.' A long, lonely journey, with sadness in the heart; away from the familiar to the strange: that is a hard and dreary thing even to the rich, the strong, the instructed: a hard thing, even when we are called by duty, not urged by dread.*" I watched her face closely. She must have recognized the difference—it was obvious—but she didn't let on.

"A little louder, please," she said.

I reached over and turned up the volume. My voice rose.

"Thank you," she said.

A pair of binoculars hung around my neck, and I lifted them, focussing on Mrs. Freninger's face. I had to squint to smooth the blurs. It was amazing to watch her so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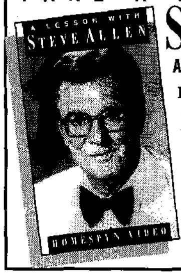

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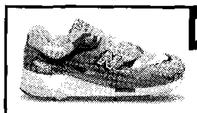

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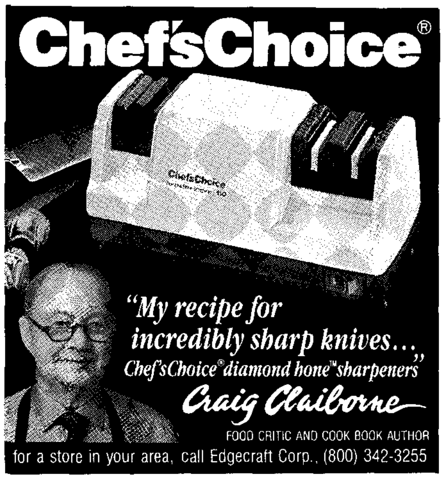

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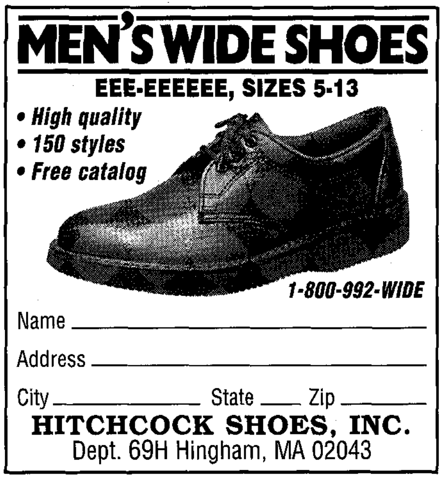

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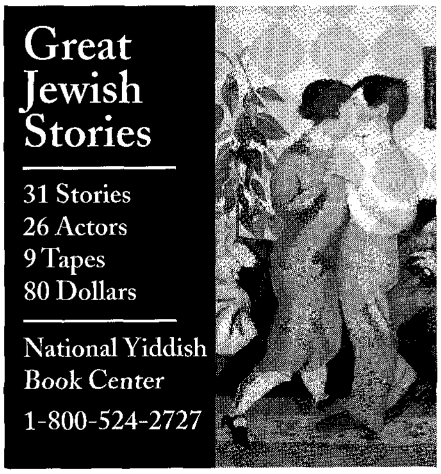

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closely. She was in the adolescence of late middle age, where beauty turns sluggish on its way to the shady side—or so George Eliot might have written. Faded freckles gave away an old love for the sun. Her hair was trapped in a bun. And a mysterious scar, about a half-inch long, slanted into those heavily made-up lips—an accident? a fight?—so thin that a scalpel seemed the only possible cause. On my lap was a leather photo album pilfered from one of the bookcase shelves. The snapshots inside showed a younger Mrs. Freninger, reluctant to smile, as if she knew that such a display was too easy. She was a woman quite used to the fact that people liked to look at her, and this allowed her a certain seriousness. Those eyes staring at you, even then, held a coldness as if they had glimpsed their eventual fate in dim, ill-defined pictures. I tried to see her as the reckless Hetty, the love of Adam Bede's life, churning the butter on Hall Farm and dreaming of Arthur Donnithorne, that dashing squire.

"Victor."

I reached over and pushed down the "Stop" button. It made a plastic click. "Yes."

"Oh, nothing." She waved her left hand. "Go ahead."

I re-started the tape and continued to watch her reactions through the binoculars. I thought I caught a hairy arch of an eyebrow above her dark glasses when Hetty met a poacher in the private game preserve called the Chase. He was smoking a cigarette by a tree, a brace of pheasant at his feet, a can of beer in his hand.

" '*Hey there,' the poacher said.*

" '*Hi,' Hetty answered. She was not unaccustomed to surprises; in fact she quite enjoyed them. 'Who are you?' she asked.*

" '*Your local poacher.'*

"*Hetty stepped back, briefly afraid of such a man. The epithet 'A thief' regretfully slipped from her well-formed lips.*

"*The poacher smiled without joy. 'Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds; and until we know what has been or will be the peculiar combination of outward with inward facts, which constitutes a man's actions, it will be better not to think ourselves wise about his character.' He stubbed his cigarette against his clodhoppers. 'I read that somewhere,' he said.*

" '*Oh' was Hetty's reply. 'Oh,' she said again, and then she was offered a beer.*"

We both listened with growing curiosity.

At the end of the chapter, Mrs. Freninger asked me for a cigarette. "I used to smoke," she said.

I lit two cigarettes, borrowing Paul Henreid's technique in "Now, Voyager." I placed one of them in the waiting V of her fingers. She brought it to her lips and inhaled, then exhaled expertly through her nostrils. The smoke seemed suited to her, reluctant to dissipate. "I quit years ago," she told me. "And all my ashtrays became decorative."

"Uh-huh."

After every few drags, I guided her hand to the ashtray, tapping off the ash for her. Lipstick stained the filter. "It was once glamorous, Victor. Now it's disgusting and offensive. Maybe I'll take it up again."

"Why not."

"A bit of a head rush," she said. "Like I'm a teen-ager again."

We smoked until the feet of the Camel emblem burned. Then I left.

WHILE cleaning the classroom one night, Alistair fell to the floor and started to roll around as if on fire. He shouted at things I couldn't see. I dropped on top of him and restrained him. He battled me all the way. "I'll bend you across this classroom."

"Just calm down," I whispered in his ear. Foam started to spill from his mouth. I tried wiping the stuff away—it was warm on my hand—but he seemed to have an endless supply. "Just calm down," I said over and over again.

"I can bend it all, Dave," he shouted. A beard of froth hung from his chin; he was a crazed Rip Van Winkle struggling against his sleep.

"Of course you can." I began yelling for help, hoping Vince would hear.

A light flickered. "I did that," Alistair told me.

"Sure," I said.

And later, before the ambulance arrived, a bird flew into one of the windows. "I did that," he told me again.

AT our next reading, with the tape player on, I began to write notes to Mrs. Freninger along the baseboards, in the corners, on sills. *Please recycle. Free Tibet. Down with meat.* I wrote my words in a crimped hand, the letters blocked and unidentifiable. I'd walk around the room and choose a particular spot. "I hope you don't mind me moving, I need to stretch my legs."

"No, not at all."

I used a felt-tip pen. *UNICEF. March of Dimes. Save the Children.* From a distance the phrases looked like resting centipedes. And sometimes they seemed to scurry. While I wrote, I heard myself describing poor Hetty's murder trial. No matter how much I tried to change the story, Hetty still ended up killing her illegitimate newborn in a fit of hopeless despair. And now she was doomed to the consequences of her vanity and lust. Only her prison-cell confession could salvage her soul.

"*Hetty was silent, but she shuddered again, as if there was still something behind; and Dinah waited, for her heart was so full, that tears must come before words. At last, Hetty burst out, with a sob—*

" '*Dinah, do you think God will take away that crying and the place in the wood, now I've told everything?*'

" '*Let us pray, poor sinner: let us fall on our knees again, and pray to the God of all mercy.*' "

I stopped the tape and said, "End of Chapter X-L-V," pronouncing the Roman numerals, not sure of their translation.

"Pretty heavy." Mrs. Freninger stretched her neck left then right, as if listening had stiffened her muscles. "Of course that letch Arthur Donnithorne gets off scot-free while beautiful Hetty has to hang. Typical." She leaned forward, her hands crossed over each other and her dark glasses fixed on me. "Hey, Victor."

"Yeah?"

"When does that poacher return?"

I unplugged the tape player, wrapping the cord in a lasso. "I'm not sure."

"I liked him," she said.

"Don't know. I haven't finished the book, either." I got up from the chair.

"How much longer do we have?"

"After 'The Hours of Suspense,' seventy more pages."

"The end is near."

"Yes," I said.

FOR the next two weeks, I avoided Mrs. Freninger, not showing up at the usual time in the afternoon. I wasn't in the mood to go on, preferring Hetty trapped in jail, the gallows still pages away, the exact conclusions of that world unknown to the two of us. During the day I treated my apartment as a cell, not leaving, just watching soap operas. It didn't take long to reacquaint myself with the plots. And the talk shows were also the same. Everything passed as intrigue, and deceptions sold product. "Money-back guarantee!" "First month free!" "Zero down!" The announcers shouted at me, their voices perfect for the pitch. "It's just that easy!" At night I worked with a new guy at the school, Stan, a humorless sort who made comments about secondhand smoke and poor health coverage. His only delusion was that he thought this job was temporary. I missed the fuller delusions of Alistair.

Then Mrs. Freninger called. "Victor, where the hell have you been?"

"Sorry, I've been busy."

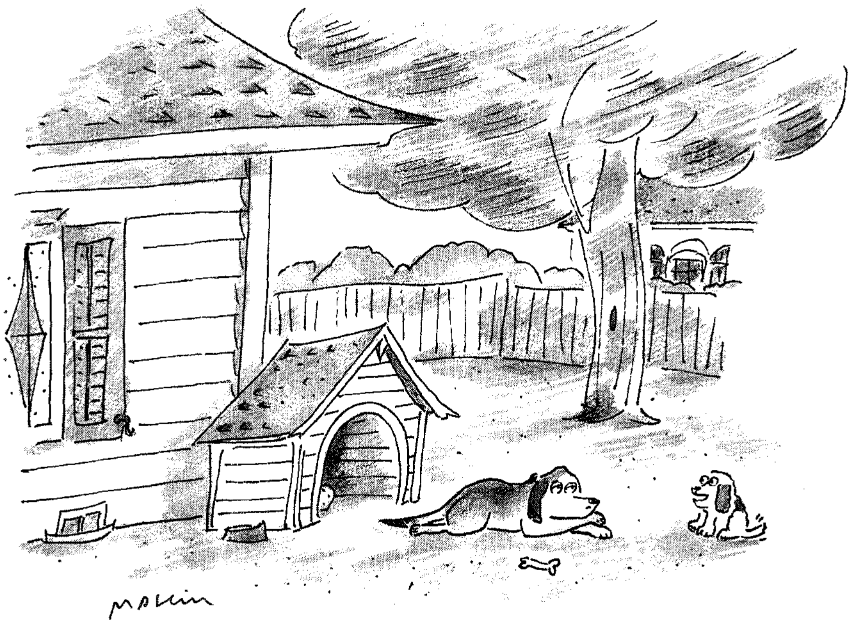
"That's no excuse," she said. "We're close to the end."

"I haven't had time."

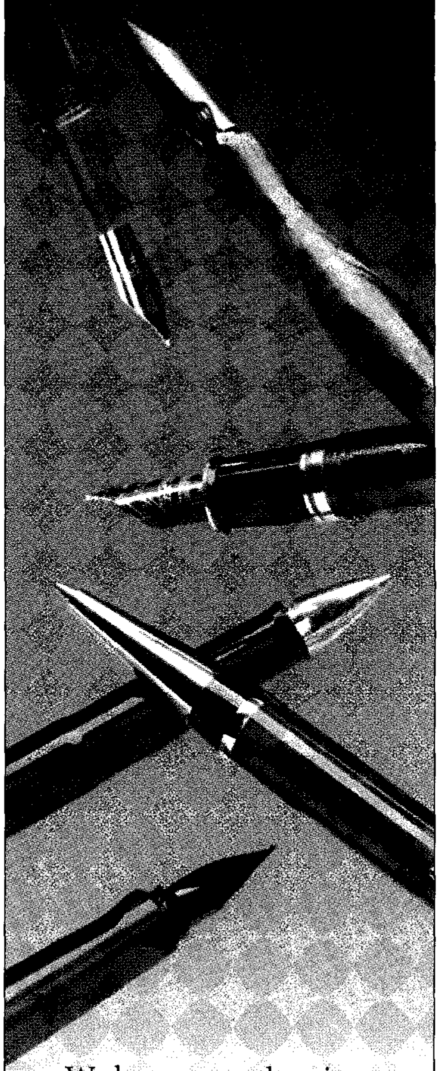
"Victor."

"I'll be by Thursday."

And when I missed that meeting she called again, her voice a little more anx-



"You make handling domestic security look so easy, you must *be good at it."*



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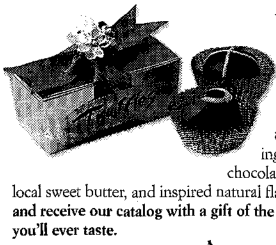

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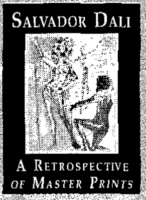

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ious. "Victor, get over here," she said. I pictured her kicking the dog in frustration.

"Tomorrow," I said.

"You better be here."

"Tomorrow."

But I wanted her to wait. And over the next few days, when the phone rang, I didn't bother to pick it up, knowing that when something is finished the next step is to forget it unless you can turn it into something else.

THERE is a moment in "Adam Bede," toward the end, which I now read over and over. It's about love's gradual approach: *Those slight words and looks and touches are part of the soul's language; and the finest language, I believe, is chiefly made up of unimposing words, such as "light," "sound," "stars," "music"—words really not worth looking at, or hearing, in themselves, any more than "chips" or "sawdust": it is only that they happen to be the signs of something unspeakably great and beautiful. I am of the opinion that love is a great and beautiful thing too; and if you agree with me, the smallest signs of it will not be chips and sawdust to you: they will rather be like those little words, "light" and "music," stirring the long-winding fibres of your memory, and enriching your present with your most precious past.*

ON Monday, I left work in the middle of cleaning a classroom, and Stan overreacted. He said it was bullshit, he even used the term "unprofessional," but I just waved him away. When I burst through the metal doors—still, after all these years of not being in school, an exciting moment of release—there was nothing outside. It was two in the morning. I don't know what I was expecting, some soundtrack swelling to crescendo, a group of cheering friends, but there was nothing except a mist not yet fallen into dew. And as I stood within that close air, I began to sense that I was a boy again and I was sick in bed and my mother had set up a humidifier in the corner of my room so that I might be able to breathe.

Mrs. Freninger didn't live far away. The windows of her house were dark, as were all the other windows on that perfect street. I sat on her steps and smoked. I flicked the cigarette on the lawn, got up, and rang the bell for a full minute until she opened the front door.

"Hello?"

"It's me," I said.

"Victor?" Her chin bumped against the screen. She wasn't wearing those useless glasses, and this seemed to make her more blind.

"I hope I didn't wake you."

"Well, actually, no. I was awake. I'm a bit of an insomniac." She opened the door and moved aside to let me in. "Everything O.K.?"

I went from lamp to lamp and turned each on, her head following me with every click. I narrated my actions for her. "I'm turning on the lights." I took off the lampshades and piled them in the corner. "I'm removing the lampshades." The room was now bright and merciless. She was wearing a silk bathrobe the color of a peach. Her toenails were painted red. And I saw her eyes for the first time. I stepped closer. They were completely black, as if each pupil had been poked with something sharp and the ink had bled into the iris and then run into the rest of the eye. "I thought we might finish 'Adam Bede,' " I said.

"Right now?"

"Yes."

She nodded before answering, "All right," then walked to the couch and sat down. Her combed-out hair hung to her shoulders. "Hetty's on her way to her execution," she said.

"Yes. 'The Hours of Suspense.' "

"That's right."

I began to take off my clothes. She heard me undo my belt, heel off my sneakers. "What are you doing?" she asked.

"The flesh is weak, as Dinah Shore might say."

Mrs. Freninger smiled and then wiped at her mouth as if something had grazed her lips. She pulled her legs up into her chest and held her feet in her hands. She rested her chin on her knees. "Is this part of the ending?" she asked.

"No story is the same to us after a lapse of time; or rather, we who read it are no longer the same interpreters," I said, cribbing from the text. In that harsh light, Mrs. Freninger watched my voice, her black eyes reflecting my pitiful body, the reflection faint or confused but definitely there.

Naked now, in the middle of the room, I held "Adam Bede" in one hand, a Magic Marker in the other. There are words that you use to describe impossible things, though they do no justice to your memory of the event. But still, you try.

I started on the left side of the room, and as the pen flowed in large and small loops over the wall, I told her my story. Soon, my pen would touch her. ♦

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BOOKS

BLOOMING GENIUS

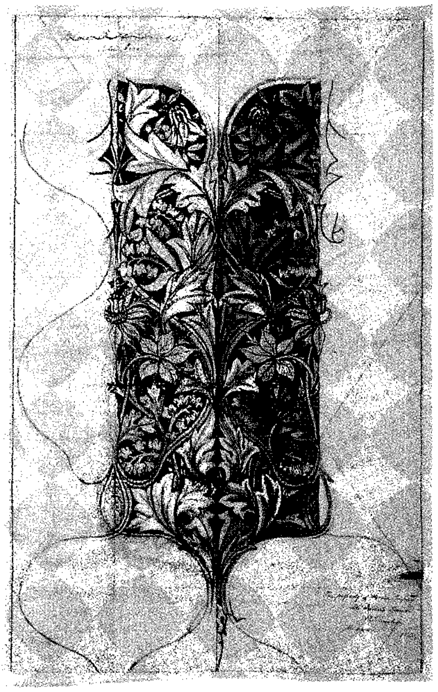
William Morris emerges from the flowers and vines as a visionary.

BY PETER ACKROYD

THE last letter of William Morris, written in the autumn of 1896, has a short postscript. "I believe," he wrote, "I am somewhat better." He was optimistic to the end. His doctor ascribed his death to his "simply being William Morris, and having done more work than most ten men." He might, indeed, have been as legendary a figure as any in the heroic medieval sagas he wrote late in life, except that he was also possessed of quintessentially mid-Victorian industry and energy. He was, at one time or another, an architect, a painter, a poet, a businessman, an interior decorator, a book illuminator, a furniture maker, a lecturer, a weaver, a magazine editor, a novelist, a Socialist campaigner, a translator, an essayist, a printer, and a publisher. Moreover, there were even occasions when he was engaged in four or five of these activities at once, and for most of his life he ran the most successful design company in England.

Some who knew him, however, tended to be more acerbic about his accomplishments. Max Beerbohm remembered that Morris "was a wonderful all-round man, but the act of walking round him has always tired me," and Dante Gabriel Rossetti caricatured him as an exhausted wombat. It is, in fact, easy to be dismissive of him in the manner of his contemporaries. When faced with Morris wallpapers known variously as Pink and Poppy, Chrysanthemum, Bird and Anemone, and Willow Bough, we may be tempted to murmur, after Oscar Wilde, that one of us will have to go. In a complete Morris room decorated with Honeysuckle curtains, Iris wall fabric, Flowerpot cushion covers, Strawberry Thief upholstery, and Tulip and Lily carpets, one is in danger of being suffocated with leaves or pressed to death by flowers.

Morris himself, curiously, seemed aware of the risk. He professed once that he would be happy to live in a house with nothing but white walls, and complained about "ministering to the swinish luxury of the rich." He was capable of extraordinary rages, too, some of them directed against his own interiors: he would butt his head against a wall so fiercely that it made a large hole in the plaster. Not even the rarest books were safe from his temper: he once hurled an ancient volume at one of his workmen, but succeeded only in knocking out a door panel. He also had a habit of lifting very heavy objects with his teeth, and of allowing children to swing from his beard.



A Morris Bluebell design, and Morris in 1877, opposite, at the start of his political campaigning. He takes his place in an English tradition with Blake, Turner, and Dickens.

He was, understandably, "too busy . . . in all ways," as he wrote in one of the letters reprinted in the sumptuously produced "Collected Letters of William Morris, Volume III, 1889-1892, and Volume IV, 1893-1896," edited by Norman Kelvin (Princeton; $45 each). A contemporary noticed that Morris's fingers were always restless, ever anxious to be doing something. In Morris's affluent and protected childhood, he had a habit of beating himself about the head in tantrums of temper and frustration. He went from one task or occupation to the next, throwing himself into each. One might also mention here the obsessive activity of his own designs, in which he forever filled every available space.

All this rage and fervor may have had a physiological explanation. Morris's most accomplished biographer, Fiona MacCarthy, has described how a bout of fury was sometimes succeeded by a "fit" or by an "absent," or trancelike, condition. One friend recalled how when Morris missed a train from Birmingham to London he uttered a "fearful cry" and was then "translated" into an abstracted state. Any posthumous diagnosis is bound to be provisional, but a form of epilepsy or of Tourette's syndrome has been suggested; his eldest daughter, Jenny, was severely epileptic, and his concern for her welfare was perhaps deepened by some sense of guilt for what may have been an inherited condition.

That is perhaps why all his life he tried to forget about himself, and even to forget about the world around him. "When I was young, I think I really succeeded in ignoring modern life altogether," he wrote to one of his illustrators. "And it was of great service to me." He lost himself in detail, so it can be claimed with some justice that his finest achievements were in the fields of pattern, calligraphy, and typography. Through work, he said, he moved beyond "transient personal and family troubles." But he was also able to move beyond himself, and for a moment ignore the bewildering darkness that provoked his fits. Yet that darkness appeared in oblique ways—in prose narratives and poems that are filled with visions of dreamlike landscapes and with what he described in one letter as "the huge and vague figures of the earlier times." But, whatever role a neurological ailment may have played in Morris's life, his gift goes beyond it. In the combination of extreme clarity of detail and

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dreamlike vagueness in Morris's work we find a true visionary who takes his place in an English tradition with Blake, Turner, and Dickens.

ARCHIVE PHOTOS

YEATS said of Morris, "If some angel offered me the choice, I would choose to live his life, poetry and all, rather than my own or any other man's." It is a remarkable tribute, but in a sense Morris anticipated Yeats's own career by moving from aesthetics to politics, from private reverie to public action. He was known as Topsy when he was an undergraduate at Oxford, in the early eighteen-fifties—no doubt because of the explosion of hair which in caricatures resembles a starfish balanced on the top of his head. He wore purple trousers then, and in his second year he discovered poetry. Or, rather, poetry discovered him. He woke up one morning to find that he could versify with endless and exuberant facility. "Well, if this is poetry," he told his friends, "it is very easy to write." In fact, it proved all too easy. He entertained his fellow-students with what were known as his "grinds," or verses, and in later years he managed to compose between seven hundred and a thousand lines in a day. In his lifetime, he enjoyed great literary success, and many obituaries referred to him simply as "the poet," but at this late date it is hard to share the general enthusiasm. There are fine passages in "The Defence of Guenevere" (1858) and "The Earthly Paradise" (1868-70), but generally Morris reads like Tennyson rewritten by a town crier. He seems to have thought of the rhymes first, and then had to stoop to the inconvenience of connecting them. He himself mocked his own fluency, and once said that "if a chap can't compose an epic poem while he's weaving tapestry, he had better shut up."

So the young Morris took to tapestry as well, and in 1861, with his friends Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, he set up a business to provide beautiful things for beautiful houses. Morris & Company, as it was eventually called, produced furniture (painted or not), murals, wood carving, and work in metal and glass, in addition to fabrics and wallpapers. On occasion, Morris would dress in vestments and play a portable organ while explaining the merits of his stained glass. Not surprisingly, the firm's earliest large-scale commissions were for churches; in fact, through Morris's influence, many Victorian houses came to resemble churches. But his was not some naïve or atavistic enterprise; he genuinely understood the importance of fine craftsmanship as an instrument of civilization. He believed that if a culture cannot make beautiful objects—either through inherited genius or through craft traditions—then it is finished. That is why, in a society of industrialized commerce and mass manufacture, he could be forgiven for his temper: he once signalled his distaste for "the market" by sitting on his top hat, his ample figure no doubt reducing it to the dimensions of a frisbee. However, he revived an alternative tradition of arts and crafts, which survives still.

MORRIS was not a natural or an expert writer of letters; he did not possess the language of intimacy, and he lacked the gift of self-dramatization which renders the correspondence of Bernard Shaw, for example, so entertaining. Morris essentially offered progress reports on his many occupations: on one page he will be describing his friendship with a Nihilist, and on another speculating on the nature of the Icelandic language; one day he is lecturing on the class struggle, and the next day his subject is Gothic architecture. Characteristically, he formed friendships only in the context of his activities, and in a letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones on the death of his mother he veers suddenly to an account of local elections. There is a directness and simplicity of expression in his writing which match what is known of his character—when he was an old man, his face still had the open benignity of a child's—but a certain impatience and roughness can be detected in the brief cadences of his hasty correspondence. He is so eager to suppress or ignore his own feelings that he neglects those of other people. No doubt that is what one close friend meant when he declared that Morris "doesn't want anybody."

In these volumes there are many letters to his ailing daughter, Jenny, but they are generally concerned with the garden and the weather. There are very few to his wife, the Pre-Raphaelite icon Jane Burden. Faced with the restless energy of her husband, she took to her sofa, rising from it only to greet the two real loves of her life—Rossetti when she was young and, later, the philanderer and poet Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. It is not at all clear that Morris felt any resentment or disappointment as a result; he simply kept on weaving. The only expressions of genuine outrage in his letters concern the abuse of ancient buildings; he was a founding member of a society devoted to their preservation, and he wrote jeremiads against the nineteenth-century vandals who were about to "restore" St. Mary's, Oxford, and Peterborough Cathedral.

These volumes of correspondence cover the last years of Morris's life, when he seems at times to have been totally lost in some dream of the past. He was writing novels set in a fantastic and elaborate medieval world; he was weaving tapestries adorned with various allegorical figures; he was creating books designed to reproduce the appearance and the texture of volumes from the late fifteenth century; and he had become a voracious collector of medieval manuscripts. It might be surmised that the whole purpose of his enterprise was to restore that sense of the past which an age of progress had temporarily mislaid and, in so doing, to redeem the time of the machine and revive what he called in one letter "the devotional fervour" of an earlier period. He possessed that enormous reverence for the past which is so much a part of the English visionary tradition, and his essentially religious spirit never deserted him. On first seeing Canterbury Cathedral, as a child, he felt that he was looking toward Heaven. When he was a schoolboy, at Marlborough, he roamed among Wiltshire's prehistoric stones and tumuli; he became enamored of medieval history while he was at Oxford, where that history was still a living part of the streets and buildings.

Ultimately, his central purpose was to bring the past back into the minds of his contemporaries. In his decorative work he retrieved the spirit of historical styles and motifs by redeploying them in new and inventive ways. This is also the secret of his prose fiction, which has been seriously misread as nothing more than an exercise in nostalgia. In fact, his later sagas are deliberately written in a version of fifteenth-century English, with Malory as the principal influence, in order to convey the intense mystery and the continuing survival of the past. In that sense, he is an unacknowledged but genuine master of an English style that stretches from Thomas Chatterton to the present day. But if he was trying to remind an increasingly secular society of its inheritance he was also trying to confront the pressures of the industrialized world. His wallpapers and textiles are filled with images of the natural world—flowers and tendrils and branches—which seem to be growing within the material itself. As an interior decorator, he was, in a literal sense, an environmentalist.

In many respects, he resembles his great predecessor William Blake, who was similarly preoccupied with the forces of English history. Both of them believed in the firm line of art, or what Blake called "the bounding outline," which turned vision into form. They despised commercialization and specialization, and believed that a beautiful object could be the product only of a single craftsman's labor. Both writers combined poetry and prose (often within a single narrative), and the similarity between Morris's typographical works and Blake's "illuminated books," if not surprising, given their common preoccupation with medieval manuscripts, is still astonishing. Theirs was the natural suspicion of the ambidextrous for the single-handed, of the visionary for the technician. They were both lovers of Gothic art, too, and believed that eternity resides in the unique detail rather than in some Newtonian world of infinitely reproducible parts. And they both took immense pride in their skill as artisans. Morris began to manufacture his own dyes, and his hands became permanently stained; he wrote his epics with blue fingers, just as Blake composed his great works while covered in engraving ink.

To bring together Blake and Morris is to invoke what Morris once called the "chain of tradition." His skill as a printer, his preoccupation with the Gothic, and his devotion to antiquity place him firmly within the history of English dissent; for centuries, London printers were known for their radicalism, perhaps because theirs is a quiet and meditative activity (blacksmiths, by contrast, were notoriously conservative), and, in fact, Morris established the headquarters of his Socialist League in the

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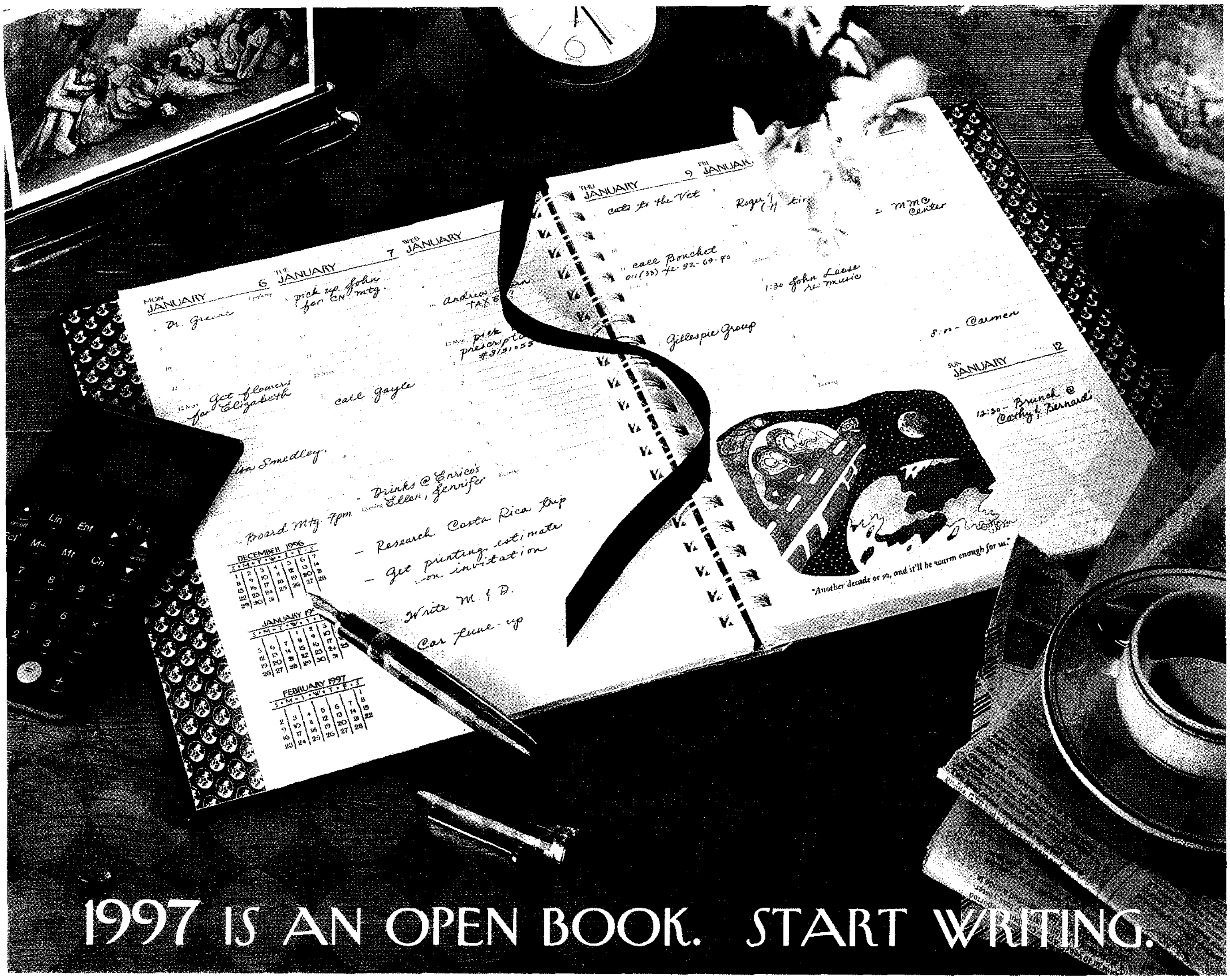
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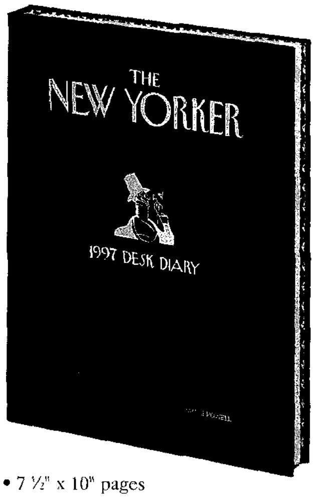
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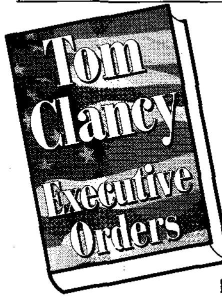

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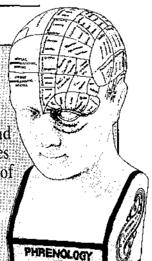

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East London district of Clerkenwell, which is the spiritual home of such radicalism. Antiquarians were noted for their radical politics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and interest in the Gothic was often translated into a concern for the lost liberties of the English people. A singular pattern emerges, therefore, of which William Morris is the most important Victorian example.

So if Morris was a successful entrepreneur, albeit one without a top hat, he was also a committed Communist who spoke on street corners and lectured in halls. He believed in the "abolition of private property" and "the struggle against Capitalism." He became acquainted with Eleanor Marx, the youngest daughter of Karl, and with Friedrich Engels; he was a friend of the leading anarchists of the period; he was arrested for public disorder; and he founded the Hammersmith Socialist Society. Yet Morris's politics were also those of an artist who hates the ugliness all around him. He loved London, and reportedly kissed the earth when he returned to it after living in the country, but he was aware that its streets were one long litany of sorrowful mysteries for the vagrant and the poor. In one essay he described modern civilization as a "counting-house on the top of a cinder-heap" and in his most famous prose work, "News from Nowhere" (1891), he created a visionary London of the twenty-first century which was dappled with meadows and streams, like an illuminated page from a Book of Hours.

For Morris, medievalism and Socialism breathed the same spirit of community and justice. He may have been mistaken in his historical analogies, but his grand vision was one of humankind restored. In the end, the heat and dust of the world broke through that vision, and he retired from active participation in the Socialist movement, but for some years he had offered a striking and convincing alternative to the more languid poets and artists of the fin de siècle. In an age when hothouse flowers of aestheticism, like Walter Pater and Ernest Dowson, were beginning their brief, perfumed lives, he saw more clearly and deeply into the true conditions of the late nineteenth century. That is why the spirit of his art and craft survives today in a thousand different forms. Topsy was a prophet, after all. ♦

DIVIDED CHILD

A son of Rhodesia—and Zimbabwe.

BY VERLYN KLINKENBORG

Peter Godwin

TOM CURRY

THERE are times in Peter Godwin's beautiful, measured memoir, "Mukiwa: A White Boy in Africa" (Atlantic; $24), when the author sounds like the child of divorcing parents trying to atone in his own person for the anger he feels in the air—sounding a note of conciliation and, ultimately, powerlessness. But in Godwin's case the divorcing parents are black and white Rhodesia. Godwin spent his childhood in eastern Rhodesia, near the Mozambique border, just before the brutal war leading to the end of white minority rule and the emergence of a new state, called Zimbabwe. He was conscripted into that war at eighteen, served in Rhodesia's paramilitary police, and eventually, after a stint at Cambridge and Oxford, returned to Harare and there helped defend former "terrs"—the white Rhodesians' term for black guerrillas—against charges brought by the government they had fought to establish. That a story like Godwin's elicits an intimate analogy—divorcing parents and a divided child—makes perfect sense: white Rhodesia was so small that when you were rolled by history the experience felt like a very personal mugging.

"Mukiwa"—the title is the Shona name of a wild fig the color of white skin—is an antiheroic memoir. It is filled with what one is in the habit of calling adventure: narrow escapes, a harrowing return in disguise to Matabeleland to investigate rumors of mass murder, a last-minute flight from certain arrest and imprisonment. But these episodes can be called adventures only if they're stripped of their private meaning, and that, fortunately, Godwin is unable to do; the book lacks the roistering jingoism—only too prevalent in Ian Smith's Rhodesia—that is necessary to such stories. Instead, it chronicles the development of a kind of internal exile, a relocation of allegiance, for which Godwin's "adventures" are the external signposts.

Of himself the author speaks with generous self-deprecation. "When I was eventually blown up, with Sergeant Ngwenya, we were lucky," he writes. This is not the stiff-lipped understatement of England's old colonials but the very modern resignation of an unwilling soldier fighting in a complicated war, where decency is the first victim. (Many readers will find analogies to "Mukiwa" in the literature of the Vietnam War, with rather interesting differences in pitch.) The tone throughout the book—muted, graciously sad—is the consequence of a liberal mind discovering its own inutility, an intelligence becoming "resigned," as Godwin says, "to the fact that there really wasn't much room in the middle in Africa—all sides ended up despising you."

Peter Godwin is also the author, with Ian Hancock, of a serious, if tart, history of war and politics in Rhodesia during the nineteen-seventies, which was published in 1993. Its title, a failed attempt at irony, is "Rhodesians Never Die," which is also the title of a "semi-patriotic song" written in 1965, with lyrics by Ian Smith's son-in-law—the kind of ditty you can imagine John Wayne having recorded if he'd been Rhodesian. In "Rhodesians Never Die" Godwin and Hancock marvel, with plainly inadequate disinterestedness, at the myopia of white Rhodesians in the early seventies: they were simply blind to the inevitability of black majority rule. One scholar described that myopia as a case of "insensate pride engendering ultimate downfall: quite like a Greek drama, except that most Rhodesians aren't particularly interesting people."

But in "Mukiwa" Godwin doesn't care whether Rhodesians were interesting or not, just as one tries never to make that judgment about one's family. What matters is the sudden starkness with which their lives were exposed as the war—their war—bore down upon them. Entering a bedroom where a white farmer lies blown apart by gunfire, Godwin stops to look around. "On his bedside table," he writes, "was an alarm clock, a novel—'The Day of the Jackal,' by Frederick Forsyth—a Supersonic radio, a glass of water, Alka-Seltzer tablets, a pack of Kingsgate cigarettes, a half-finished cup of cold tea, and the beginnings of a shopping list in an open notebook. . . . A wicker dog basket stood in the corner, worn slippers on the floor." The ordinary erupts in the presence of a corpse, yes, but the reader can't help also being conscious of the weight of Godwin's unnerving detachment, which had been shaping itself since childhood.

It is tempting to call "Mukiwa" an impartial memoir, but in a sense its balance results from the fact that Godwin is partial in every direction. He's a feeling writer, whether he's writing about going on patrol in a war zone with a unit of black policemen or about trying to decipher the complexities of finding himself, a lower-form schoolboy, acting as a servant to a black upper-form student. "Here I was, a white boy, skivvying for a black in a country that was embarking on a civil war to prevent black rule. I must be the only white servant of a black man in the whole damn country, I thought. And I felt oddly special." But what's special about Godwin is not the ironies of his situation. Those were, in fact, common to everyone in Rhodesia, black or white, and are common to everyone living in a racist society. What's special is the sense one gets, reading "Mukiwa," of a conscience that tries to resist coarsening and does not forgive its own failures. ♦

FAMILY VALUES DEPARTMENT

[*From The New Republic*]

Today Dole is speaking to the Iowa Pork Congress. Basically it is a convention of people who raise pigs for slaughter, together with their sundry loved ones.

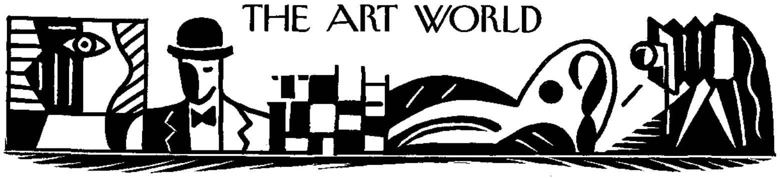
BRIEFLY NOTED

Pagan's Father, by Michael Arditti (Soho; $24). Who is Pagan's father? Leo, a TV personality in whose care the five-year-old girl has been left by her mother, Candida, certainly doesn't know, and now Candida has taken the secret to her grave. When Pagan's grandparents seek custody, Leo's homosexuality becomes their major weapon. Leo, addressing the dead mother, recounts the ensuing legal and emotional battles, in a moving novel about the survival of a modern family in the grip of death and the dead hand of convention. Arditti's graceful prose allows an abundance of harrowing incident to stay decorously short of melodrama.

Kiss & Tell, by Alain de Botton (Picador; $22). When this British narrator is accused of narcissism by a departing girlfriend, he resolves to demonstrate his ability to take an interest in another by becoming the biographer of the next person he meets. Fortunately, this proves to be an attractive young woman, encountered at a London party. Not a biography, of course, but a portrait and a meditation on what it means to tell someone's story, this ingenious, and even wise, novel elicits an almost continuous smile.

The Flight: Confessions of an Argentine Dirty Warrior, by Horacio Verbitsky, translated from the Spanish by Esther Allen (New Press; $22). In the nineteen-seventies, under the military dictatorship that later lost the Falklands War, Francisco Silingo was a junior naval officer who, as part of his duties, pushed drugged political prisoners out of airplanes into the Atlantic. At the time, his superiors convinced him that such extreme measures were necessary to defend Argentina against subversives. Silingo finally told his story to Verbitsky, because his former commanders—instead of publicly justifying their actions as they had once justified them to their men—claimed that the reign of terror had never occurred. This book caused a furor last year in Argentina, where at least nine thousand of the "disappeared" remain unaccounted for, but its lessons about officially sanctioned atrocities are universal.

But Beautiful, by Geoff Dyer (North Point; $21). A gorgeous and lyrical collection of nocturnal jazz reveries, in which Dyer uses history, photographs, and recordings the way his famous subjects use musical themes—as a starting point for creative embellishment and improvisation. Separate chapters imagine scenes from the lives of Lester Young, Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Ben Webster, Charles Mingus, Chet Baker, and Art Pepper—lives in which squalor, hardship, substance abuse, and madness are ultimately redeemed in music. In brief interstitial episodes, Duke Ellington, himself a renowned portraitist, drives serenely across the American landscape with the sax man Harry Carney, forever on the way to the next gig.



NARROW SPACES

In the salons of the Court Jews and the cellars of wartime Holland.

BY SIMON SCHAMA

THE closest I ever got to the world of the Court Jew was when I worked, some twenty years ago, for a Rothschild—an experience that was not all Bordeaux and banking. At a testy moment in our self-evidently unequal relationship, the Rothschild in question informed me that the family motto was "Service," adding (lest I be in any doubt), "And by God we get it!"

A single image in the Jewish Museum's learned and evocative exhibition "From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power, 1600-1800" reminded me of the ambiguities of such service. In an eighteenth-century Moravian Passover Haggadah, sweetly illuminated by the scribe Moses Leib, a family sits at Seder. Dinner has been eaten, and it is time to open the door to receive the prophet Elijah, for whom a cup of wine is being filled by a liveried servant, dressed in blue tunic, tricorne hat, and breeches. The Seder, then, is in proper accordance with tradition. But given the sumptuous attire of the heads of the house (white silk gown for father, embroidered crimson jacket for mother), given the dolphin-tail chairs, the fountain playing in the garden court, and the glass decanter from which the wine is being poured, you can bet it's not Moravian Manischewitz that's being offered as the prophet's tipple. Even the Paschal foods—bitter herbs, boiled egg, and roasted shank bone—repose not on a conventional Seder dish but on a crimson cushion, as if they were the crown jewels. Welcome to the kosher Baroque, made up in equal parts of piety and pomposity and, for a century or two, permitted a little room to air its pretensions and its cultivation.

The curators of the show, Richard I. Cohen and Vivian B. Mann, have done the memory of the *hoyfyuden* proud. Their thoughtfully conceived exhibition is less an array of masterpieces than an evocation of a particular cultural world through its treasures and self-representations. Amazingly, they have managed to avoid both sentimentality and the claustrophobia that one might expect from an exhibition dominated by the German princely courts. A gallery devoted to the rise and fall of Joseph Oppenheimer, known as Jud Süss, who in 1738 ended his spectacular career as financial counsellor to the Duke of Württemberg by being hanged inside an iron cage, is reminder enough that the power and prosperity of the Court Jews were always precarious. But even amid the graphic evidence of schadenfreude in the thirty prints that gloat and cackle over the fate of the presumptuous Jew, with his fancy carriages and Christian mistresses, the victim's features are relatively free from the poisonous demonology that both preceded and followed this historical moment. The Devil's horns and tail that featured in sixteenth-century Lutheran anti-Semitism have gone, and the hook noses and blubbery lips of modern anti-Semitic stereotypes have not yet arrived. This is a celebration, then, of a cultural intermission, profuse and colorful within its narrow space, and sometimes displaying surprising exchanges between Jewish and Gentile cultures. A Mahzor, a festival prayer book, made for Alexander David of Braunschweig, for example, borrows the calendrical conventions of Books of Hours, so that Kislev, the month of Chanukkah, is represented by a hunter handling a pair of hounds. A coffee service in impeccable Nymphenburg porcelain bears Hebrew inscriptions; and a silver-gilt ship centerpiece, which was presented by Veitel David to the Landgrave of Hesse, is crewed by a host of miniature sailors and pikemen, but has at its commanding center an Oriental, turbaned figure—the very incarnation of the merchant captain.

The curators want to suggest that these hybrids were the result of a genuine two-way cultural traffic—that the Star of David and the menorah that appear on a gem-studded agate amulet given to the Hapsburg Emperor Rudolf II by the Prague community are symptoms of an active interest among the German princes in the religion they had routinely brutalized. But Rudolf—a neo-Platonist mystic drawn to the Cabala, among other occult treatises—was the least typical of the Hapsburgs, and he was followed by a series of fanatical Counter-Reformation martinets for whom the only good Jew was an apostate. The electors and landgraves and margraves whose patronage dominates the center of the show were less interested in Cabala than in cash. Their Court Jews were no more than the latest version of the minters, treasurers, and gem merchants who for centuries had been either privileged or punished (and often both, in swift succession) as their services to the princely coffers merited. It was the collapse of the revenue base of the German princes in the wake of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), when their populations and territories were devastated by plague, famine, and indiscriminate slaughter, that gave the likes of the Oppenheimers, Wertheimers, and Gomperzes their main chance. Puny or powerful, the German princes needed the wherewithal to furnish the palaces and parks that secured their status within the complicated pecking order of the Holy Roman Empire. In the state of military anarchy that prevailed in Baroque Central Europe, offices and tax exemptions were made available to Jews, who could guarantee all the military supplies from oats to groats—a necessity, if the prince was to emerge victor rather than victim of that merciless plunder-world.

Of course, functioning as moneybags to these peruked gangsters entailed risks as well as opportunities. What made the Court Jews so convenient was their defenselessness against default. And, should new taxes become unavoidable, the ruler was the first to pin responsibility for his own prodigality on the Jewish treasurer.

Given the hazardousness of their position, it was all the more remarkable that a number of the Court Jews not only survived but went on, in rococo Germany, to establish prospering dynasties, whose

Passover, Baroque style: an early-eighteenth-century Moravian illumination of a family at Seder.

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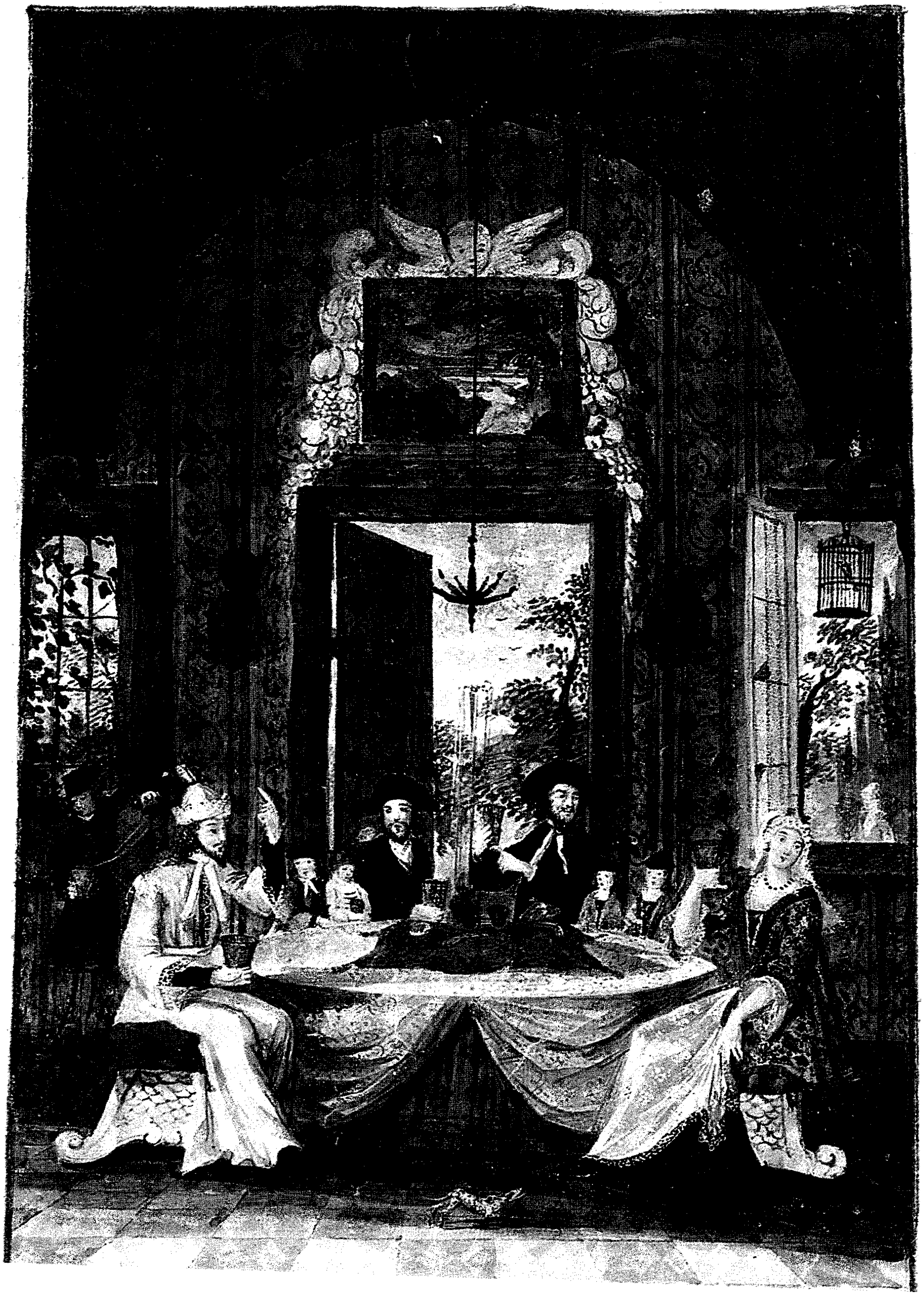

"Sure, we hobnobbed, but we never networked."

• •

solidity was reinforced by judicious marriage alliances. In Berlin and Vienna, Mannheim and Frankfurt, they moved from timbered residences to grandiose, masonry-fronted town houses, some of which, like the Ephraim mansion, in Berlin (represented in the exhibition by a stunning modern model), were of truly palatial proportions. Yet this transformation into an urban patriciate happened, at least initially, without much loss of traditional faith and customs. Some of the handsomest items in the exhibition speak to this unforced marriage of modes. A prettily embroidered Torah-scroll binder, for example, features a wedding canopy—the chupah—with the bride and groom dressed in high-rococo fashion, in gold-green silk hooped dress and black silver-trimmed tunic and cloak. But since the chupah was meant to be open to the stars, it is accompanied in the decorative pattern by images of the zodiac—bulls, goats, and archers—vaulting, Chagall-like, through the heavens.

When the Court Jews felt secure enough, they began to sit for their portraits. Visibility, once shunned as the mark of the pariah, now became desirable, and the scriptural equation of man-made likenesses with idolatry surrendered to the desire for conspicuous self-commemoration. Few of the portraits in the show rise above mediocrity, but the awkwardness with which the Jewish sitters are fitted into an aristocratic genre precisely mirrors early conflicts between assimilation and orthodoxy. As some of these anxieties recede, so does facial hair, retreating from the full and shaggy beard in the portraits of early-eighteenth-century rabbis and patriarchs to the mercantile goatee of the midcentury and then disappearing altogether, leaving the clean-shaven gentlemen-scholars of the Berlin salons. The most engaging of the show's paintings are of Jewish women—less surprising when one knows that some of them were active, indeed senior, partners in the family business. The formidable Chaila Kaulla, of Stuttgart, for example, who stares back at us framed by cake-rack bonnet and industrial-strength earrings, became contractor to the Duke of Württemberg.

Ultimately, though, Court Jew society reveals itself more eloquently through its objects—things that were palmed or sipped from or worn—than in its stiff and stilted paintings. It is most palpable in the elegance of a lovingly fashioned travelling case of weights, measures, and a handheld balance; in the brilliant floral decoration of a prayer shawl; or in the delicate butterfly sketched in Brunette Oppenheim's 1790 "Liber Amicorum," an apt symbol for a culture whose splendor was matched by its fragility.

VISIBILITY and invisibility are the subject of a second, powerfully affecting show at the Jewish Museum—"The Illegal Camera: Photography in the Netherlands During the German Occupation 1940-1945." While German Jewry had long been anxious about conspicuousness, the relatively smooth integration of Jews into Dutch culture made them significantly less prone to "peculiarity anxiety." Louis de Jong, the eminent historian of the wartime Netherlands, has commented on the bitter irony by which the positive experience of Jews in his country left them *less* well prepared for the betrayals and cruelties that would mark the road to Westerbork and Auschwitz. One of the most poignant images in the exhibition is of a Jewish girl waving cheerfully from the courtyard of the Hollandsche theatre in Amsterdam, where arrested Jews were rounded up, as she spies her friend the photographer.

The Jewish catastrophe, however, is not the central subject of these photographs, nor (though the helmets and boots of German soldiers and police appear in the shots) is the behavior of the occupiers. Instead, what emerges with force and clarity—even when the images themselves are out of focus or partly obscured by lace curtains and cellar doors—is a collective portrait of the wartime Dutch themselves. In 1944, Queen Wilhelmina, still in London exile, called her compatriots "a nation of heroes," an honor that most of its resistance leaders immediately repudiated as being sharply at odds with the anti-epic nature of their sabotage. They understood only too well that the geopolitical circumstances of their occupation had dictated a strategy of urban subterfuge, perfectly captured in photographs shot from cameras mounted in bicycle baskets or roof gutters. For the classic landscape of partisan resistance was utterly missing in the Low Countries. There were no mountains or dense forests offering shelter for armed bands but, rather, a nakedly open countryside, tightly packed towns, and a closely connected system of road, rail, and canals, which made the Netherlands an occupier's playground. Those who chose to resist, then, had no alternative but to take the struggle into the territory they knew best, their streets and alleys, and deeper, into the very innards of their houses—into cellars, attics, crawl spaces, cisterns. So the photographs of the resistance at work are as much scenes of domestic business as those in any seventeenth-century genre painting. Indeed, some of the pictures of food containers being studiously filled with explosives or of radio sets being tuned by clandestine "marconists" adopt the same poses of intense absorption that feature in Golden Age paintings of lacemakers or drawing masters.

The Germans made things worse for themselves by violating so many of the sacred cows of Dutch patriotism—including, of course, cows, requisitioned along with bicycles, church bells (to be melted down), and horses, as the grip of the Reich on northern Europe became steadily less secure. Forced labor was another assault on the settled freedoms of Dutch civic life. About two hundred thousand of the conscripts went underground; many of these *onderduikers*, or "divers," were sheltered in the homes of resisters and subsequently became active themselves. Some of the most startling images in the show are cases of guns and grenades intruding into the smoky coziness of the Dutch parlor.

Courage is seldom rewarded as it deserves, and the sufferings inflicted on the Dutch—Jews and non-Jews—seem in inverse proportion to their sacrifices. In no other occupied country were there so many public strikes against the occupiers, yet the Dutch economy was effectively exploited for the German war effort. Initial attempts to round up Jews in Amsterdam were met with the protests of February, 1941, yet the Holocaust consumed all but a remnant of that community. To make matters worse, news of the Allied liberation of the southern town of Breda, in September, 1944, proved tragically premature, provoking only the unseemly scramble of Dolle Dinsdag (Crazy Tuesday), when hidden cameras gleefully recorded the sight of German troops and Dutch collaborators attempting to exit by the quickest possible route, seated ingloriously atop coal tenders. And when "Operation Market-Garden" at Arnhem turned into a debacle, the occupation tightened throughout the northern section of the country, which was forced to endure the nightmarish Hunger Winter of 1944-45: it is movingly recorded in the sunken eye sockets and gaunt cheeks of some of the famished victims.

There are big and little ways to resist wickedness. Along with strikes and sabotage and illegal news bulletins, the Dutch specialized in countless small acts that defied the German presumption of incorporating them into some greater Germanic Reich. Postage stamps were stuck on the left-hand corner of envelopes, leaving the right-hand corner free for the Queen in exile; noisy "HALLO"s, meaning "*hang alle landverraders op*" ("hang all traitors"), were exchanged. So, if we are becoming overfamiliar with images recording the banality of evil, these few photographs remind us of the redeeming goodness of the prosaic. ♦

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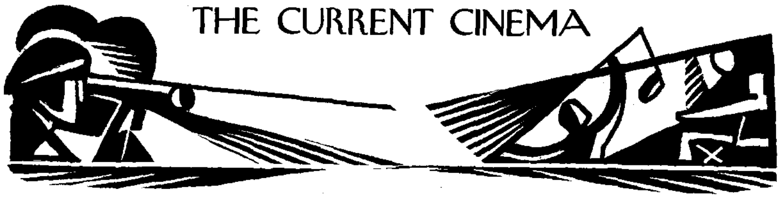


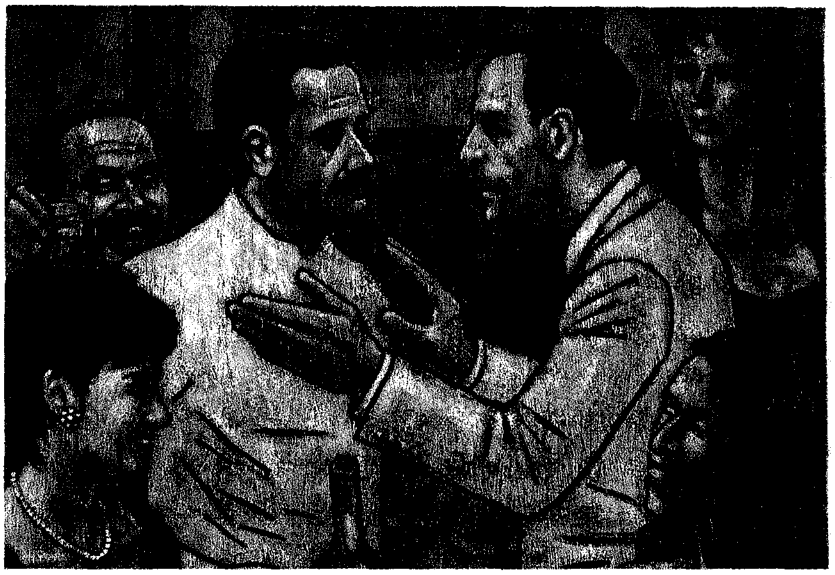
THE CURRENT CINEMA

FEAST AND FAMINE

A culinary comedy, and a remake of "Yojimbo."

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

THE primary setting of Campbell Scott and Stanley Tucci's "Big Night" is an Italian restaurant called the Paradise, which, like the movie itself, is small, quiet, and elegant. The restaurant clearly reflects the low-key dignity of its owners, a pair of immigrant brothers named Primo (Tony Shalhoub) and Secondo (Tucci). Primo, the chef, is a shy and rather unworldly culinary perfectionist; he's mostly content to remain in the kitchen, meticulously re-creating the great cuisine of his homeland, while his suaver, more pragmatic little brother deals with impatient loan officers and placates customers who expect a side of spaghetti and meatballs to accompany Primo's lovingly seasoned risotto. The upscale urban audiences who patronize low-budget independent pictures like "Big Night" are bound to sympathize with the struggles of Primo and Secondo, whose approach to food preparation is well ahead of its time; the action takes place in the fifties, when the popular image of Italian culture was pretty much exactly represented by a heaping plate of spaghetti and meatballs. The then current stereotype, of exuberant, excessive, mamma-mia Italianness, is embodied by the brothers' local competitor, Pascal (Ian Holm). His establishment is loud and overdecorated, and the food he serves up symbolizes to Primo "the rape of cuisine"; but Pascal's is packed every night, while the Paradise, just down the street, clings to its purity and generally ends up closing early.



Actors' paradise: Janney, Holm, Shalhoub, Tucci, Rossellini, and Driver, in "Big Night."

JAMES BURRIS

It isn't difficult to see that "Big Night" is essentially a fable of art versus commerce. Stanley Tucci also wrote the screenplay (in collaboration with his cousin Joseph Tropiano), and has shaped the story into something that functions as both a demonstration and a vindication of the sort of subtle, finely detailed character acting that he and Tony Shalhoub have practiced in relative obscurity throughout their careers. Although both these wonderful actors have appeared in several movies—once together, in the underrated Bill Murray comedy "Quick Change" (1990)—their most substantial roles have come in series television:

Tucci in "Wise Guy" and "Murder One" (in which he played the sinister smoothie Richard Cross), and Shalhoub in the sitcom "Wings" (he's the lonely, fatalistic Italian cabbie, Antonio). The chief pleasure of "Big Night" is watching these two expert miniaturists in starring roles: they seem to be challenging themselves—and each other—to create large characters without sacrificing the deft, precise craftsmanship that they would apply to more modest parts. They pull it off beautifully, and their graceful work together appears to inspire their fellow-performers. The cast of "Big Night" is obviously a happy, relaxed ensemble; this is actors' Paradise.

And, thankfully, "Big Night" manages to avoid the independent-movie trap of being too pure and noble for its own good. Early in the picture, Primo, after dismissing his brother's hesitantly offered suggestion of a minor change in the menu, advocates an idealistic approach to attracting customers—"If you give people time, they learn"—and Secondo, through clenched teeth, responds, "This is a restaurant, not a fucking school." "Big Night" sanely balances the brothers' contradictory (and equally valid) philosophies: it takes its time, allowing us to adjust our Hollywood-coarsened sensibilities to its leisurely rhythm and understated humor, but it never forgets that it's a movie, not a school. Although the picture is dedicated to the principle of tiny, delicate, scrupulously crafted aesthetic pleasures, the filmmakers have the good sense to lay out plenty of them for us to sample. "Big Night" surrounds Primo and Secondo with a vivid gallery of characters. Ian Holm's Pascal is a brilliant comic portrait of a man whose vulgarity is both instinctive and cunningly calculated; this is the juiciest screen role Holm has had in years, and he sinks his teeth into it greedily. Isabella Rossellini, as Pascal's unfaithful mistress, Gabriella, is languid, sultry, and surprisingly funny (she should do comedy more often); Campbell Scott contributes a swift, hilarious turn as a fast-talking Cadillac salesman; and Minnie Driver and Allison Janney, as the brothers' sort-of girlfriends, serve quite nicely as their characters stand and wait. And the movie rewards its characters by bringing them all together for a gustatory blowout at the Paradise—a special dinner that represents the brothers' last chance to save the restaurant. The guest of honor is to be the popular singer-bandleader Louis Prima; his endorsement, the brothers hope, will give the business the boost it needs.

By the time the lavish dinner has begun, about halfway through, you may already suspect that the movie's title will prove to be ironic; it's apparent that, in this picture's world, "big" is hardly an indication of value. Even while you're rooting for Primo and Secondo to bring off their public-relations coup, you sense that this sort of self-consciously "important" event isn't really their style. (The deepest irony of the situation is that the stage persona of the man they're trying to impress, Louis Prima, trades on cliché images of Italians as swarthy, bouncy, bellowing exhibitionists. Prima—described by one character, charitably, as "boisterous"—is Italian in all the ways that Primo and Secondo, to their financial misfortune, are not.) The big night doesn't work out as the brothers planned, but it also doesn't go wrong in quite the manner that the viewer expects. Instead of ruining Primo and Secondo's evening with slapstick mishaps, "Big Night" stages a party in which everything that matters—that is, the food and the social atmosphere—is idyllically right, and only the larger intentions go unsatisfied.

The soup-to-nuts spread that Primo and Secondo lay out for their lucky guests looks marvellous, and, unlike the haute-cuisine banquet of "Babette's Feast," this food is clearly meant to be eaten rather than genuflected to. The party scene is a fitting climax to the movie's patient accumulation of savory and blissfully pointless delights, a convincing illustration of how keen pleasure for pleasure's sake can be. And Tucci and Shalhoub use this extravagant set piece to put the finishing touches on their performances. Tucci, whirling through the restaurant's uncharacteristically crowded dining room, miraculously combines a born host's easy charm with a bad businessman's unnerving eagerness to please; his manner tells us all we need to know about Secondo's restless spirit. Although for most of "Big Night" Secondo appears to be more comfortable in America than Primo does, by the end of the movie we realize that the older brother is fundamentally the happier of the two. Shalhoub is one of the few actors who could make us understand the *innocence* of an obsessive artist like Primo and make us laugh at it, too. One of Shalhoub's best effects is a sort of slow blink before he

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delivers a line; his eyes remain closed just a beat or two longer than they should, as if he were hoping that the world outside would just go away, and when they open again, reluctantly, he looks terribly disappointed. It's an actor's trick (he uses it frequently on "Wings"), but in this picture it seems something more: a lovely comic expression of an artist's childlike willfulness and self-absorption. In the banquet scene, though, his eyes remain open, and, for once, he appears to like what he sees. As the diners dig into his glorious food, *their* eyes keep closing—partly, perhaps, in homage to the chef, but mostly in uncomplicated rapture.

AKIRA KUROSAWA said of "Yojimbo," his 1961 samurai action comedy, "The story is so ideally interesting that it's surprising no one else ever thought of it. The idea is about rivalry on both sides, and both sides are equally bad." The hero, a mysterious loner, resolves the standoff by shuttling between the competing factions and deliberately provoking a war—a bloodbath that neatly eliminates both groups of thugs. This is, in fact, such a good story that someone *had* thought of it before Kurosawa: Dashiell Hammett, whose classic 1929 novel "Red Harvest" traces the ingenious manipulations of a nameless detective as he leads dozens of gangsters and corrupt politicians to what amounts to a mass suicide. Three years after "Yojimbo," Sergio Leone borrowed this satisfying plot structure for a Western: "A Fistful of Dollars," with Clint Eastwood as a cigarillo-chomping gunslinger-provocateur. Walter Hill's new film, "Last Man Standing," is ostensibly a remake of "Yojimbo" (the credits acknowledge that Hill's screenplay is "based on the story by Ryuzo Kikushima and Akira Kurosawa"), but this treatment, ambitiously, tries to evoke elements of the other famous versions of the story as well. The action takes place in a tiny Texas border town during Prohibition—that is, in Leone's landscape and in Hammett's time period. Hill is smart enough not to imitate the styles of any of his predecessors; like the hero, who calls himself John Smith (Bruce Willis), he struggles mightily to hang on to his independence. But the filmmaker pays a price: the only vantage point he can find to make this material look fresh turns out to be someplace lofty and remote—too far above the fray.

In Hill's fascinating, up-and-down career, most of the box-office hits have been fast-paced urban thrillers ("The Warriors," "48 Hrs.") and several of the commercial disappointments have been elegiac Westerns ("The Long Riders," "Geronimo: An American Legend," "Wild Bill"). It's a matter of taste, but the neglected films of the latter group may be his best, and Hill is undoubtedly frustrated that so few people have seen them; the oddly overdeliberate style of "Last Man Standing" may represent his attempt to showcase his more serious manner to the potentially large audience for a Bruce Willis tough-guy vehicle. The picture is impressively shot and edited, but the technique feels wrong for the story: "Last Man Standing" transforms what should be a speedy, bloody tall tale about an amoral prankster into one of those archetype-heavy action sagas that lumber from mythic tableau to mythic tableau and never generate much excitement. The movie takes itself too seriously to recognize even a trace of humor in the spectacle of vermin in fedoras and double-breasted suits bumping one another off. And John Smith's grim omnipotence is a poor substitute for the down-and-dirty shrewdness that enabled the heroes of "Yojimbo," "Red Harvest," and "A Fistful of Dollars" to survive the carnage they created. The trouble with archetypes is that they're predestined to survive: Smith is the last man standing only because, like the movie itself, he seems to have been standing still all along. ♦

ALIEN EMOTIONS

Come late November, after Sigourney Weaver finishes the run of Christopher Durang's "Sex and Longing" (now in previews at the Cort), she will become the outer-space-movie heroine Ripley again—in "Alien: Resurrection"—and stand up to that durable dripping creature once more. As Durang's Lulu, she lets loose on some more down-to-earth creeps, taking on a scandal-plagued President and a whole culture of chic addiction, confession, and recovery. Lulu is hilariously louche and candid—a great part—and Weaver finds her admirable. "I think of her as being like all of us," she says. "Us with the brakes off, of course."

Photograph by Chris Callis

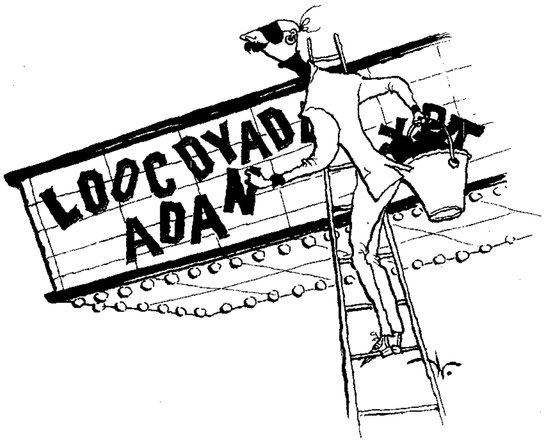
SHOUTS & MURMURS

RESERVOIR FROGS

(OR, PLACES CALLED MAMA'S)

BY SALMAN RUSHDIE

FOR the first time since the decline of Dadaism, we are witnessing a revival in the fine art of meaningless naming. This thought is prompted by the American release of the British film "Trainspotting" and by the opening of Lanford Wilson's new play, "Virgil Is Still the Frogboy." Mr. Wilson's play is not about Virgil. No frogs feature therein. The title is taken from an East Hampton, Long Island, graffito to whose meaning the play offers no clue. This omission has not diminished the show's success.



As Luis Buñuel knew, obscurity is a characteristic of objects of desire. Accordingly, there is no trainspotting in "Trainspotting"; it's just a predictable, even sentimental movie that thinks it's hip. (Compared to the work of, say, William S. Burroughs, it's positively cutesy.) The movie has many admirers, perhaps *because* they are unable to understand its title, let alone the fashionably indecipherable argot of the dialogue. The fact remains: "Trainspotting" contains no mention of persons keeping obsessive notes on the arrival and departure of trains. The only railway engines are to be found on the wallpaper of the central character's bedroom. Whence, therefore, this choo-choo moniker? Some sort of pun on the word "tracks" may be intended.

Irvine Welsh's original novel is no help, though it provides a glossary for American readers: "Rat-arsed—drunk; wanker—masturbator; thrush—minor sexually transmitted disease." But at least an effort at translation is being made here. Out-and-out incomprehensibilists disdain such coziness.

How many readers of Anthony Burgess's novel "A Clockwork Orange," or viewers of Stanley Kubrick's film, knew that Burgess took his title from an allegedly common but actually never used British simile, "queer as a clockwork orange"? Can anyone recall the meaning of the terms "Koyaanisqatsi" and "Powaqqatsi"? And were there any secrets encrypted in "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," or was it just a song about a flying girl with a necklace?

Nowadays, dreary old comprehensibility is still very much around. A film about a boy-man called Jack is called "Jack." A film about a crazed baseball fan is called "The Fan." The film version of Jane Austen's "Emma" is called "Emma."

However, titular mystification continues to intensify. When Oasis, the British pop phenoms, sing "You're my Wonderwall," what can they mean? "I intend to ride over you on my motorbike, round and round, at very high speed"? Surely not.

And "Blade Runner"? Yes, I know that hunters of android "replicants" are called "blade runners"—but why? And yes, yes, William S. Burroughs (again!) used the phrase in the title of a 1979 novel; and, to get really arcane, there's a 1974 medical thriller called "The Bladerunner," by the late Dr. Alan E. Nourse. But what does any of this have to do with Ridley Scott's movie? Harrison Ford runs not, neither does his blade. Shouldn't a work of art give us the keys with which to unlock its meaning? But perhaps there aren't any. Perhaps it's just that the phrase sounds cool, thanks to those echoes of Burroughs, Daddy Cool himself.

In 1928, Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí co-directed the Surrealist classic "Un Chien Andalou," a film about many things, but not Andalusian dogs. So it is with Quentin Tarantino's first film, "Reservoir Dogs." No reservoir, no dogs, no use of the words "reservoir," "dogs," or "reservoir dogs" at any point in the movie. No imagery derived from dogs or reservoirs or dogs in reservoirs or reservoirs of dogs. *Nada*, or, as Mr. Pink and Co. would say, "Fuckin' *nada*."

The story goes that when the young Tarantino was working in a Los Angeles video store his distaste for fancy-pants European auteurs—like, for example, Louis Malle—manifested itself in an inability to pronounce the titles of their films. Malle's "Au Revoir les Enfants" defeated him completely ("oh reservoir les oh fuck") until he began to refer to it contemptuously as—you guessed it—"the, oh, reservoir dogs movie." Subsequently he made this the title of his own movie, no doubt as a further gesture of anti-European defiance. Alas, the obliqueness of the gibe meant that Europeans simply did not comprenday. "What we've got here," as the guy in "Cool Hand Luke" definitively remarked, "is a failure to communicate."

But these days the thing about incomprehensibility is that people aren't supposed to get it. In accordance with the new Zeitgeist, therefore, the title of this piece has in part been selected—"sampled"—from Lou Reed's wise advice "Don't eat at places called Mama's," in a recent issue of this magazine. To forestall any attempts at exegesis ("Author, Citing Dada's Erstwhile Esotericism, Opposes Present-Day 'Mamaist' Obfuscations"), I confess that as a title it means nothing at all; but then the very concept of meaning is now outdated, nerdy, preironic. Welcome to the New Incomprehensibility: gibberish with attitude. ♦

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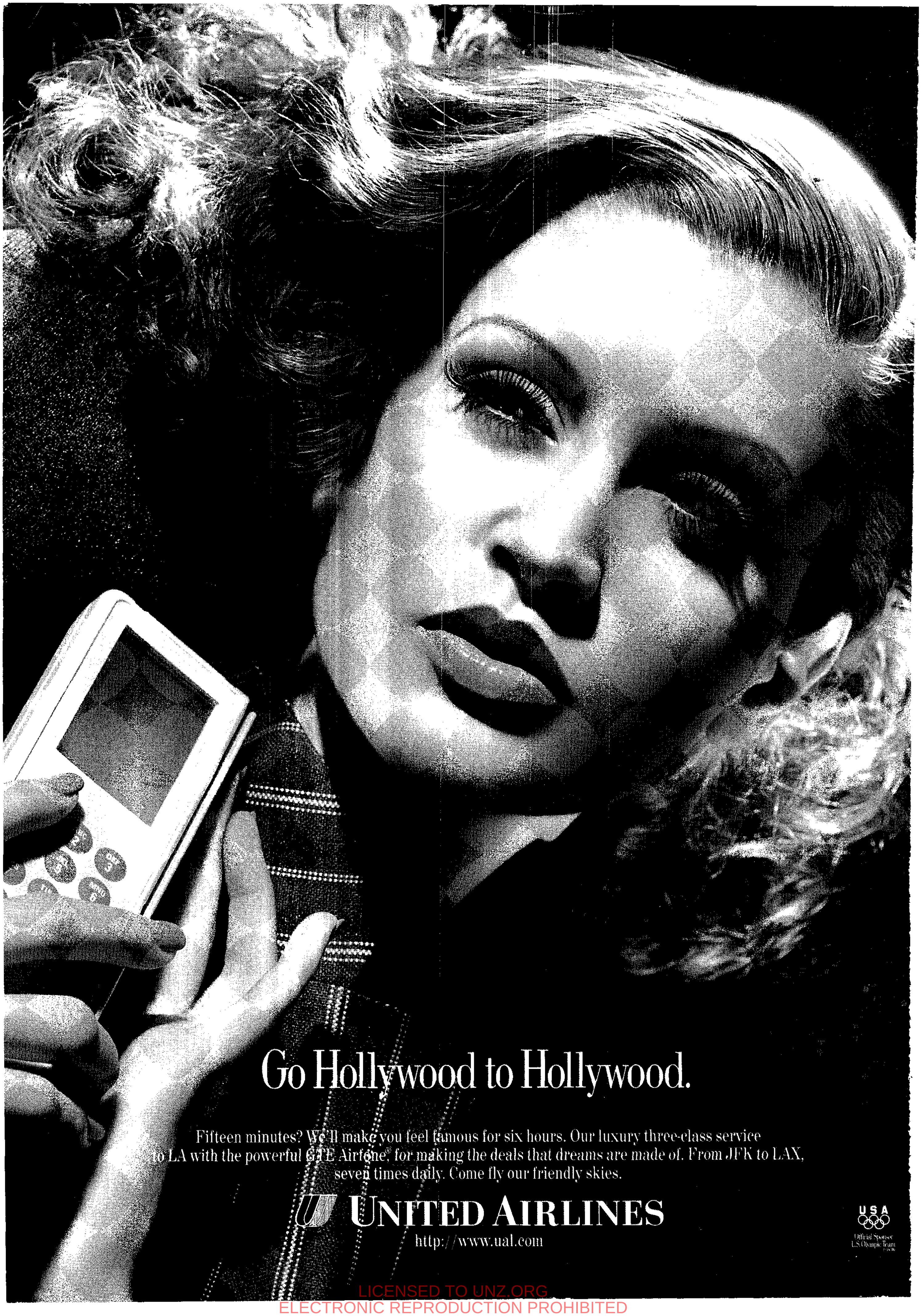
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